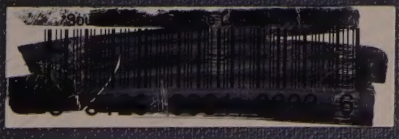

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# JOHN WESLEY
# THE
# MASTER-BUILDER

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BY

JOHN S. SIMON, D.D.

AUTHOR OF
'JOHN WESLEY AND THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES,'
'JOHN WESLEY AND THE METHODIST SOCIETIES,'
'JOHN WESLEY AND THE ADVANCE OF METHODISM,'
'A SUMMARY OF METHODIST LAW AND DISCIPLINE,'
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# PREFACE

In this book I have followed the lines taken in former volumes of the series. I have described Wesley and his work, and have recorded the progress of the constitution of the Methodist Church during an important part of the eighteenth century. It will be seen that Wesley's 'sphere of influence' suddenly expands. America takes its place in the list of 'stations.' I have devoted considerable space to its introduction into that country. Having visited America twice, I am aware of the position occupied by Methodism in the United States to-day. The Methodists and the Baptists occupy in the States the highest places among the Protestant Churches. Millions of members belong to each of them. The task of describing the introduction of Methodism into the American Colonies has not been easy; but I have read several of the histories written by men at different stages of its advance, and have had much help from American correspondents. As to the latter, I wish to say that, as I have taken my own course in my description of the introduction of Methodism into America, my correspondents are in no case responsible for opinions I have expressed on questions still in dispute.

I have found that, in matters concerning John Wesley's work, my position as President of the Wesley Historical Society still secures for me many advantages. The 'experts' of the society have willingly come to my aid. My thanks are hereby given to them. They are also due to the Rev. John Elsworth, who is not only an expert in Methodist history but also in making an index.

*June*, 1927.

J. S. S.

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# I

## ABUNDANT LABOURS

In 1757, when the London citizen determined to forsake his shop and spend a day in the fields, his thoughts would probably turn to Tottenham Court Road and its rural neighbourhood. It was then a country of meadows and gardens, in which he could ramble at peace. The lover of 'far distances' had only to lift up his eyes to see the heights of Hampstead ridged against the sky. A few houses dotted the intervening space. If the wanderer had not visited the road for a year he would be startled by seeing, near its beginning from the High Street, a new building. Speaking to a passer-by, he would learn that it was a chapel that went by the name of 'Whitefield's Tabernacle.' He would go on his way wondering. It is difficult at the present time to picture Tottenham Court Road of those far-off days. But, walking along the crowded pavement, we must halt, and try to recover the past as we stand near one of the successors of the building that excited the surprise of the London citizen in the middle of the eighteenth century.

On May 2, 1756, George Whitefield wrote to Lady Huntingdon telling her that he had taken 'a piece of ground, very commodious to build on, not far from the Foundling Hospital.' He informed her that he had opened a subscription list, and that the amount already contributed was £600. He was convinced that a place in which the gospel would be preached was needed in that part of the town. It must be remembered that his conviction had been sharpened by his recent experiences. He had preached several times in a chapel in Long Acre, and had roused the fury of the actors in the theatres of that neighbourhood. He had been burlesqued on the stage, and the Long Acre chapel had become a centre of riotous attack. He says nothing in his letter about John Wesley's chapel in West Street, Soho; but it is clear that he was convinced it did not

meet all the needs of the West End of London. Lady Huntingdon was much impressed by his letter. She and some of her friends gave him strong financial support; the money contributed soon amounted to a sum that warranted the immediate erection of the building. At the beginning of June, 1756, the foundation-stone was laid; on November 7, in the same year, the 'Tabernacle' was opened 'for divine worship, according to the forms of the Church of England.'[1]

After John Wesley had got possession of the West Street Chapel he on several occasions consulted Archbishop Potter, Bishops Gibson, Secker, and Lowth, and was encouraged by them in his enterprise. He says that they never blamed him for acquiring the chapel in all the conversations he had with them; and that, so far as he knew, no one in England ever thought that his acquisition of the chapel was 'leaving the Church.'[2] But much had happened since that time. Although Whitefield intended that divine worship in the new 'Tabernacle' should be conducted 'according to the forms of the Church of England,' he was aware that something more was required to protect the chapel against mob attacks. He seems to have suggested a solution of the difficulty which will interest all who are acquainted with the history of the Conventicle Act. He and his advisers agreed that it would be advisable to place the chapel under Lady Huntingdon's 'protection.' Those who have studied the Act will know that special privileges were accorded to religious meetings held in noblemen's houses. The right of search could only be exercised by persons distinctly specified in the Act, and this provision was of considerable use in the case of meetings held in Lady Huntingdon's residence. Encouraged by this fact, Whitefield and his advisers thought they had found a way of escape. They took high legal opinion on the question. That opinion was in accordance with the anticipation of all who were capable of understanding the provisions of the Conventicle Act. It was as follows: 'No nobleman can license a chapel, or in any manner have one, but in his dwelling-house; the chapel must be private, that is, not with doors to the street, for any persons to resort to at pleasure, for then it becomes public. A chapel cannot be built and used as such without the consent of the parson of the parish; and

[1] *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 206–207.
[2] *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 134–135.

when it is done with his consent, no minister can preach therein without licence of the bishop of the diocese.' This opinion caused the 'protection scheme' to be laid aside; and Whitefield came to the sound conclusion that the chapel must be licensed under the Toleration Act. He and John Wesley had already taken that course in the case of some of their preaching-houses, and the practice slowly and surely became established.[1]

'Whitefield's Tabernacle' was soon filled. It had to be enlarged, and in after-years it was rebuilt. We will linger for a while in Tottenham Court Road, in 1757, in order to emphasize a fact often overlooked. We must remember that the chapel built in 1756 was not the only 'Tabernacle' existing in London; and we must not forget that in various parts of this country similar buildings had been erected. As we think of them we are dissatisfied with the description of Whitefield once given by an enthusiastic admirer. He likened him to the angel in the Apocalypse who was seen 'flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people.' No man stood more firmly on the earth than Whitefield. We presume that the allegorist was thinking of Whitefield's frequent visits to America; but the figure adopted scarcely does justice to his concentrated work in this country. America certainly claimed and received much of his attention, but what are the facts of the case? In 1755 he returned from America, and remained in England until 1763. Then, after spending two years in America, he came back to England in the summer of 1765 and stayed here for four years. He once more landed in America in September, 1769. On September 30, 1770, he died there at the early age of fifty-five years. These figures show how great was the proportion of the time he gave to England. In this country his work was constant and remarkably successful. He hastened through England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, proclaiming 'an eternal gospel' to multitudes of people. He had his own view of certain aspects of that gospel. They led him into friendly differences with other evangelists, but those differences gave him special opportunities of usefulness in Scotland and Wales. It is necessary to emphasize the importance and permanence

[1] *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 206–207.

of his influence in this country. We remember his own doleful estimate of its evanescent character when contrasting the results of his work with those secured by Wesley's superior methods of organization; but we think it was made in a despondent moment. One of the best-known children of Despondency is Delusion.

While we have lingered in Tottenham Court Road in the light of the distant past, we have seen more distinctly 'the parting of the ways' along which the Wesleys and Whitefield were travelling. But we must not forget that their old friendship had been re-established, and that it prevailed in coming years. Their paths were not far asunder. The interval between them did not prevent those who walked in them from speaking cheering words of salutation. We may dismiss our anxieties concerning the Wesleys and Whitefield.

In 1757 Charles Wesley discontinued his work as an itinerant preacher. Every reason for that discontinuance has not been discovered; but we think that Thomas Jackson, in his *Life of Charles Wesley*, has suggested the direction in which a successful search might be conducted. Dealing with the problem, after stating that the reasons for the change of Charles Wesley's practice have never been fully disclosed, Jackson says:

> It is probable that they were various, but in the absence of all direct evidence we have nothing but conjecture to offer. Not a document in his handwriting, bearing the date of 1757, when he is said to have become stationary, can be found; not even the fragment of a letter, of the same period, addressed to him by his brother; so that no original testimony bearing upon the question can be adduced. Mr. Berridge, the eccentric Vicar of Everton, who was partly contemporary with him, attributes the cessation of his itinerancy to his marriage; but this could only be one among other causes. . . . A regard for the feelings and the society of his wife, with the care of his children, doubtless contributed to detain him at home; yet the principal cause of his settlement, in all probability, was the state of feeling which existed in many of the Societies and preachers with regard to the national Church. He deemed it a matter of absolute duty that they should all remain in strict communion with her. His brother thought separation highly inexpedient; but he could not view it in that heinous light in which it appeared to Charles. In reference to this subject he was therefore inclined to moderate counsels, and satisfied himself with gentleness and persuasion in dealing with those who were disaffected towards the

Establishment; while Charles was prepared for the adoption of strong and compulsive measures. Here was, therefore, an obvious difficulty. Charles could not visit the principal Societies in Great Britain and Ireland as a mere friend, or as one of the preachers. He must appear as possessing a co-ordinate authority with his brother; and, as their views differed so very materially, they could not, in regulating the affairs of the Societies, act in perfect concert. Hence he appears to have thought it the best course for him to retire, and leave the people and preachers generally in the hands of John, whose talents for government were of the highest order. Charles could write hymns with a facility and a power which no man of his age could equal; and few could surpass him as an awakening and effective preacher; but he had no aptitude for controlling and harmonizing the discordant spirits of men. For the maintenance of discipline in cases of difficulty his faculties and habits were not at all suited. His uprightness, generosity, and the kindness of his heart were unquestionable, but his impetuosity created prejudice, and left a soreness in the minds which his brother could easily conciliate and direct. Though he ceased to travel, his union with the Methodists remained to the end of his life, and he rendered most important service to the cause of true religion, though in a more limited sphere than he had been accustomed to occupy.[1]

Thomas Jackson's carefully expressed opinions do not cover the whole case, but they help us to understand some of the reasons of Charles Wesley's retirement from the work of an itinerant preacher. We watch that retirement with regret. But it is well to cultivate the habit of searching for bright light in a dark cloud. We find it, in this case, in the fact of Charles Wesley's long residence in Bristol. We have had exceptional opportunities of studying Bristol Methodism. We have known some of the 'ancients' who could recall incidents of the days immediately following the death of John Wesley. Charles Wesley occupied a high place in their esteem. The Methodism of Bristol has been distinguished by its special tone. Making inquiries concerning its origin, we have often been assured that it has arisen, in great part, from the long residence of Charles Wesley in the city. His home was in Bristol from September, 1749, to May, 1771.

The Methodists of Bristol had reason to be content with Charles Wesley's decision, but it greatly increased the weight of the burden John Wesley had to bear. We must now fix our attention on John Wesley, and watch him as he carries on his work during this period of transition. In estimating the

[1] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 135–136.

weight of the burden he had to carry we must remember that, at the time, he had not regained his full physical strength. We admire his courage ; but our sympathy is often aroused when we see him forcing his way through a mass of difficulties which his conscience would not permit him to avoid. In London, in addition to preaching in the Foundery and other places, it must be remembered that, at West Street, Snowsfields, and Spitalfields, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper had to be administered. At West Street the number of communicants was very great. He says that his services there on a Sunday ' took him up between four and five hours ' ; and we know that preaching and giving the sacrament at West Street was only a part of his Sunday work in London. If we follow him during the opening months of 1757, we shall understand his position.

On Sunday, February 6, John Wesley merely says that the number of communicants at Spitalfields made the day ' a little more laborious ' ; but on Sunday, February 27, we hear a painful note of weariness. After the service at Snowsfields he found himself much weaker than usual ; he feared he would not be able to go through the work of the day, which he estimated as being 'equal to preaching eight times.' It is well known that under all trying circumstances he was accustomed to resort to private prayer. That habit reveals the secret of his victorious life. Thinking of West Street and the sacrament there, he asked that God would send him help. As soon as he had done preaching at ' the Chapel ' a clergyman, who had come to town for a few days, offered to help him. His comment is : ' So when I asked for strength, God gave me strength ; when for help, He gave this also.' On Saturday evening, March 12, he was at Snowsfields. He tells us that ' for the want of time and help ' it had become necessary to preach and administer the Lord's Supper there once a month. At the close of the service he was exhausted, and a vision of the next day's work at West Street depressed him. Once more he prayed, entreating God to send him ' help at the Chapel.' To his relief, a clergyman ' he had never seen before ' offered to assist him. His load became lighter. He preached at West Street on Sunday, March 13, and the load must have been lifted altogether from his mind. When he commenced the sacramental service he found another clergyman at his side.

Let us look at his companion. He had been ordained 'priest' that morning, and had hastened from Whitehall to West Street because he feared that Wesley would have no one to help him. Who was he? His anglicized name was John Fletcher. We see the radiance of Wesley's gladness in his words: 'How wonderful are the ways of God! When my bodily strength failed, and no clergyman in England was able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland! And a help-meet for me in every respect. Where could I have found such another!'

John Fletcher occupies such a prominent place in the history of Methodism that we must pause to point out the links that united him with Wesley. He was born on September 12, 1729, at Nyon, in Switzerland, a town about fifteen miles north of Geneva. His father had been an officer in the French service, but had left it when he was married. After a time he became a colonel in the militia of his own country. When his son, John Fletcher, was very young he sent him to the University of Geneva, hoping that he might become a clergyman. But in this he was disappointed. John Fletcher's heart was set on the army. Notwithstanding all persuasion, he determined to have his own way. Without the consent of his parents he went to Lisbon, gathered together a company of his own countrymen, accepted a captain's commission, and engaged to serve the King of Portugal on board a man-of-war that was getting ready to sail to Brazil. Before the ship sailed he met with an accident, which disabled him for a time. The ship sailed without him. She was lost at sea and heard of no more. John Fletcher left Lisbon, his passion for the military life being undiminished. An uncle, a colonel in the Dutch service, procured for him a commission. He set out for Flanders. But once more he was disappointed. Peace was proclaimed, and his vision of the chance of fighting vanished. His uncle died soon afterwards, and with great regret, John Fletcher abandoned his intention of being a soldier. At this crisis it occurred to him that 'it would not be amiss to spend a little time in England.'

Landing in England, he found himself in difficulties arising from his slight knowledge of the language. Hearing of an opening in a school at South Mimms, in Hertfordshire, which belonged to a Mr. Burchell, he went there and began to study

English. When the school was removed to Hatfield he went with it. The charm of his character had captured Mr. Burchell, 'who loved him as his own son.' In 1752 a French minister who had made his acquaintance procured him a place as tutor to the two sons of Mr. Thomas Hill, who lived at a mansion then called Tern Hall, in Shropshire. Mr. Hill was a Member of Parliament. It was his custom to take his family with him when he went up to London to attend the sessions of the House of Commons. A journey when John Fletcher was one of the company arrests our attention. Stopping at St. Albans, the tutor went out to see the town. He stayed so long that Mr. Hill set out for London without him, leaving a horse for him to ride. Fletcher got back to the inn, mounted his horse, and overtook the party in the evening. Mr. Hill asked him why he had stayed behind. This was his explanation: 'As I was walking, I met a poor old woman, who talked so sweetly of Jesus Christ that I knew not how the time passed away.' Mrs. Hill then said, 'I shall wonder if our tutor does not turn Methodist by and by.' He replied, 'Methodist, madam! Pray what is that?' She answered, 'Why, the Methodists are a people that do nothing but pray; they are praying all day and all night.' 'Are they?' said he. 'Then, by the help of God, I will find them out, if they be above ground.' He discovered them in London and was admitted to the Society. From that time, whenever he was in London, he met in the class of Mr. Richard Edwards.

John Wesley was of opinion that it was in January, 1754, in the second year after Fletcher had removed to Tern Hall, that the great change in his religious experience occurred. After much mental conflict he saw clearly his way to the Cross, and rejoiced in the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins. All his bonds were broken; he breathed a purer air; he was able to say with confidence, 'The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' His joy in the deliverance that had come to him made him an evangelist. He began to exhort others to 'behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.' Then came the conviction that he ought to seek for 'orders' in the Church of England. We have seen him at Whitehall in 1757, and have watched him as he hurried to assist John Wesley at the West Street Chapel. At this point it is only

necessary to say that he was not only diligent in preaching in the chapels at West Street and Spitalfields, but wherever the providence of God opened a door he proclaimed the gospel. He preached, not only in English, but, under special circumstances, in French. Spitalfields, the home of many Huguenot weavers, furnished him with opportunities for preaching in his native language. Having pointed out the links uniting the man from 'the mountains of Switzerland' with the weary worker in London, we must again fix our attention on John Wesley.[1]

On February 28 John Wesley went to Norwich. He had long desired to see 'the little flock' there, but had hesitated to revisit the city, because, by one of the provisions of his lease of the Norwich Foundery, he was bound to rebuild part of that structure, and he had not the money for the work. At last the money was given him, 'by one of whom he had no personal knowledge'; so he rode off with a light heart. Staying for a few days in Norwich, he returned to London with Thomas Walsh, who had been preaching in the city 'not without a blessing.' On March 14 he went to Canterbury with Walsh. He preached in the evening and the next morning. The morning service delighted him. He was refreshed in spirit at the sight of the large number of soldiers who crowded to hear him. His comment is significant. He says, 'And is not God able to kindle the same fire in the fleet which He has already begun to kindle in the army?' He returned to London; once more John Fletcher assisted him in administering the sacrament. It seemed as if light was breaking through the clouds that had oppressed him. On Good Friday, April 8, he met the Society in London, and read over and enlarged upon Joseph Alleine's *Directions for a Thorough Conversion to God*. The members were deeply impressed, and Wesley desired those who were able to meet him on Easter Monday to come to Spitalfields, so that they might renew their vows of service. On Monday evening about twelve hundred members of the Society responded to his appeal. This Covenant Service made great demands on his strength. He had expected help, but was disappointed. He says: 'I held out till between seven and eight. I was then scarce able to

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xi. 276–289, 8vo ed. In this book references to Wesley's *Works* are to the 1831 ed.

walk or speak, but I looked up and received strength. At half-hour after nine God broke in mightily upon the congregation. " Great " indeed " was our glorying " in Him ; we were " filled with consolation." And when I returned home between ten and eleven I was no more tired than at ten in the morning.'

On Tuesday, April 12, John Wesley set out, at five o'clock in the morning, on a tour of visitation of the Midland and Northern Societies. He seems to have had companions, but their names are not mentioned. He had not ridden more than two hours when rain began, which was driven by ' a most furious wind.' It was one of those seasons in which storms sometimes continue through April into May. For weeks Wesley had to face the howling wind and lashing rain, but he went steadily on his way. Reaching Bedford, he found that his home was to be with Mr. William Parker, the mayor.[1] He was heartily welcomed. His opinion of the mayor is recorded in his *Journal* ; it may be commended to the consideration of high municipal authorities : ' He hath not borne the sword in vain. There is no cursing or swearing heard in these streets ; no work done on the Lord's Day. Indeed, there is no open wickedness of any kind now to be seen in Bedford. Oh, what may not one magistrate do who has a single eye and a confidence in God ! ' He was much impressed by the mayor's vigorous policy, and preached that evening and the next morning ' the law as well as the gospel.'

Following John Wesley in his long journey through the Societies, it is necessary to remember that his visitation occurred during the distracting time of the Seven Years' War. That war affected many countries ; indeed, it seemed as if all the principal nations of the world had met in the shock of arms. Owing to the fact that a Hanoverian king sat on the English throne, British troops shared the perils, defeats, and triumphs of Frederick the Great in some of his battles against Austrian, French, Russian, and other continental armies. Confining ourselves to that aspect of the war which more especially concerns our own country, we note the fact that the Seven Years' War, by sea and land, was carried on, not only in Europe, but also in India and America. At the point we have reached, the anxiety in England concerning the result

[1] For William Parker see John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 84–86.

of the war had nearly reached the dangerous stage of panic. It was well that during this critical period the victories of Clive in India and the triumphs of our fleet nearer home brought relief to the over-strained feelings of the British people. The wild excitement with which victories were celebrated may be taken as a measure of the depression that had been caused by the unfortunate events which marked some of the earlier stages of the war. As time went on, the apprehension of defeat and the fear of invasion gradually subsided; but that stage of confidence had not been reached in 1757 when John Wesley rode through England.

When this country is in danger, the popularity of the navy and army is suddenly increased. It did not need the hoisting of the signal to create Wesley's enthusiasm for sailors and soldiers. Those who have followed his career will have had evidence of that fact. He was often indebted to soldiers for protection against mobs, and for the help they gave him in his evangelizing work. In the 'first race' of Methodist preachers the names of several soldiers will be found. We also meet with some instances in which the origin of Methodist Societies may be traced to old army men who, settling in towns and villages, gathered a few people together, and cared for their religious condition before Wesley and his preachers visited the neighbourhood. We have seen how quickly Wesley saw the uniform in his Canterbury congregation. We will now follow him as he travels to Leicester. On Thursday, April 14, he left Bedford. In the evening he preached in Leicester, probably in a building that was known as 'The Barn,' which stood in Millstone Lane. He found a congregation there which he estimated at a thousand people. Forty or fifty soldiers were present. John Brandon, the leader of a small Society, was also there. Brandon had been a dragoon, and had settled in Leicester. It is probable that he was the first Methodist in that town.[1] We judge that he was the pioneer preacher in Leicester, and remained there for a considerable time. A letter which Wesley wrote to his clergyman friend, Walter Sellon, on December 1, 1757, suggests that fact. Sellon had wished him to send an additional preacher to Leicester, Ashby, and the adjacent places; and Wesley replied, 'Only

[1] According to Myles, Brandon became a lay preacher in 1755; he retired from the work in 1766. *Chronological History*, 446, fourth ed.

prevail upon John Brandon to spend a month or two in London, or any other part of England, and I will immediately send another. . . . But during the present scarcity of labourers we cannot spare a second for that small circuit till you spare us the first.'[1]

Leaving Leicester on Friday, April 15, John Wesley and his companions turned their horses' heads towards Birmingham. They had intended to go by the straight road, but found the constant storms had made it 'scarce passable'; so they were obliged to go round by Coventry. However, they reached Birmingham in the evening. The next day Wesley met the Society and spoke to each member. His comment shows his concern. He says, 'What havoc have the two opposite extremes, Mysticism and Antinomianism, made among this once earnest and simple people! Had it not been good for those men not to have been born, by whom these little ones have been offended?' In the afternoon he rode to Dudley and preached. On Sunday he had intended to preach in Birmingham in the open air, but was prevented by the streaming rain; and so he had to find shelter in the 'house.' He was going to Wednesbury, and he prayed that God, if He saw good, would stay 'the bottles of heaven' for the sake of the people there. He set out in the drenching rain with his companions. As they approached the town the rain stopped, and he preached twice in the open air to great congregations. As soon as he finished the evening service the rain returned and continued during a great part of the night. On Tuesday, April 19, we see him riding between Nantwich and Poole. Suddenly a thick black cloud came across him and his companions. A violent wind rushed upon them; it nearly bore them off their horses. It was fortunate that the danger soon passed, 'the wind fell, and the cloud bore clear away.' The next day Chester was reached, the congregation in the evening being quiet and serious. To Wesley's joy, he found that the Society, which had passed through many turmoils, was nearly a third part larger than when he was there in the previous autumn.

On Thursday, April 21, Wesley rode to Liverpool. The condition of the Society there demanded special attention. A lay preacher, who had been received in 1755 and expelled

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiv. 200, 8vo ed.

in 1757, had produced a great disturbance; about half the Society had been swept away. It was necessary that Wesley should stay for several days in the neighbourhood in order that he might repair the damage that had been done. On Sunday he attended the services in St. Thomas's Church. It had been consecrated in 1750, and the Methodists regarded it as their 'parish church.' At the time when he attended the services there—in April, 1757—it bore evidence of the destructive force of 'the great storm.' The upper part of the high spire had been blown down. The roof of the church and the gallery, pews, and pavement had suffered from the descending masses of stone. Sitting among the ruins, Wesley heard two timely and suggestive sermons, one on 'Counting the cost before we begin to build,' and the other on 'Be ye angry, and sin not.' He thought that both sermons were 'exactly suitable to the present case of many in the congregation.'[1]

When Wesley left the neighbourhood of Liverpool he made his way to Yorkshire. Visiting Haslingden, he listened to the stories concerning the earthquake near Heptonstall, which had also been felt by many persons at Bingley and in the neighbourhood of Preston. It had been preceded by a hoarse rumbling, and the tremor of the earth had run, from east to west, nearly sixty miles. He was intensely interested in natural phenomena, and we can imagine the keenness with which he listened to the stories of the people who had felt the shock. When he visited Roughlee, the centre of the persecutions we have described in another place, he met with an experience which confirmed his convictions concerning the dangers of tranquillity. He found that those who had 'stood firm in the storm had melted away in the calm.'[2] He was saddened by the news. He went on to Keighley. At the beginning of the service he had 'neither voice nor strength left'; but he gave out his text and began to preach. Then, after awhile, his voice was strengthened and his message was clearly delivered. On Saturday, May 21, he had 'a little conference' with the preachers in Keighley. We have no record of the subjects that were considered, but suppose they related to questions which had arisen in the immediate neighbourhood. In the afternoon he went to Bingley, and on that

[1] St. Thomas's Church stood midway between the Custom House and Pitt Street Chapel. It was demolished in 1906.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 102, 115.

May day he must have been charmed with the music ringing through 'the throstle-nest of England.' He preached to an audience that impressed him by its 'gentility,' and still more by the way in which his straightforward sermon was received. The next day, after preaching at Bingley at five o'clock in the morning, he mounted his horse, and, with a companion, rode to Haworth. 'A December storm' met them on the mountain, but a great congregation gathered in the church for the service. After the sermon, nearly a thousand communicants were present at the administration of the sacrament. In the afternoon, as the church would not contain more than a third of the people, he went into the churchyard and preached to the multitude. As soon as he began to speak the rain came down; but no one seemed to regard it. They had come to hear the great preacher, and listened to him in spite of the storm.

On Monday, May 23, John Wesley and his companion set out on a long ride. They took horse at four o'clock in the morning. They were going through the Lake District. Those who are familiar with 'lake rain' will understand the significance of his entry in his *Journal*: 'It rained till noon without any intermission, and we had heavy showers in the afternoon.' However, he reached Ambleside. Resting there, he set out, on the next day, for Whitehaven, going by way of Keswick. He confesses that when he got within a few miles of Whitehaven he was so tired that he could scarce either ride or walk. He had to preach in the evening. But his usual remedy of 'more work for overwork' acted. Before he had preached a quarter of an hour all weariness was gone. On Wednesday he was in the saddle again. He rode through a desolated country. He was surprised to see, not only hedges and shrubs without a green leaf upon them, but abundance of trees likewise naked as in the depth of winter. Upon inquiring about the cause of the desolation, he was told that, some time before, a violent wind had gone through this part of the country. It had thrown down chimneys, walls, and barns; it had torn up trees; it had scorched every green thing it touched as with fire, so that all the leaves immediately fell off. Not only bushes and fruit-trees, but elms, oaks, and firs, had withered away to the very roots.

On Whit-Monday, May 30, we hear the voice of John Wesley

as he is preaching in the Wigton market-place at noon. Then we see the travellers mounting their horses and riding towards Solway Firth. They crossed it, and pursued their journey. On June 1 we catch sight of them on the road to Glasgow. When they are about a mile from the city they are greeted heartily by a horseman who had ridden out to meet them. He is no stranger to us. He is the Rev. Dr. Gillies, Wesley's friend, and his host on a former visit to Glasgow.[1] Dr. Gillies again entertained him. In the evening Wesley preached in the yard of the poorhouse. A 'tent'—that is, a covered pulpit—had been placed there for his accommodation; it fronted the infirmary. Most of the patients were at or near the windows. Adjoining the infirmary was the hospital for lunatics. After he had preached, an event occurred which throws light on his advance in wisdom and charity. Four children were brought to him to be baptized. Which form of administering the sacrament should he adopt? In earlier days that question would have been swiftly answered. But, since those times, he had learned many a lesson that had broadened his views. He had been at the kirk in the morning when several children had been baptized; and, in the Glasgow poorhouse, he adopted the Scottish method, to the great satisfaction of those who witnessed the ceremony.

After preaching the next morning at a place not named, Wesley went in the afternoon, probably with Dr. Gillies, to the college, and saw the new library and the collection of pictures. He had the artist's eye and temperament, and he rejoiced in the pictures of Raphael, Rubens, Van Dyck, and other great painters. He regretted that, owing to the smallness of the building, there was not room to place these pictures of the great masters to advantage. The next day he walked through all parts of the old cathedral, 'a very large and once beautiful structure.' With his companion he went up 'the main steeple,' and got a prospect both of the city and the surrounding country. He says, 'A more fruitful and better cultivated plain is scarce to be seen in England. Indeed, nothing is wanting but more trade, which would naturally bring more people, to make a great part of Scotland no way inferior to the best counties in England.' It is refreshing to watch him in his moments of relaxation from work, and to

[1] *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 247.

listen to the enthusiastic expressions of his delight in things that are venerable and beautiful.

On Sunday, June 5, Wesley was in the presence of the crowd once more. Preaching in the open air in the afternoon, it was judged that two thousand people, at least, went away not being able to hear; but several thousands heard very distinctly, 'the evening being calm and still.' After the preaching he met a number of persons who were members of 'the praying Societies.' Wesley earnestly counselled the members to meet Dr. Gillies every week, and gave them the sound advice 'not to talk loosely and in general, as their manner had been, on some head of religion, but to examine each other's hearts and lives.' In that counsel he struck the predominant note of the Methodist class-meeting.

On Monday, June 6, Wesley began his journey toward England. The records in his *Journal* show that small Methodist Societies had been formed in several places in Scotland; but in them he missed the vivacity which characterized so many of those south of the Border. Before he reached Newcastle his physical trouble recurred; but he held on his way. He reached the Orphan House on June 14, and for the rest of the month he made it the centre of incessant work in the towns of the neighbourhood. In glancing over the records in his *Journal* we notice several entries that are worthy of mention; but we will content ourselves by indicating two which have exceptional value. He holds up the Society of colliers at Plessey as a pattern to all the Societies in England. 'No one ever misses his band or class; they have no jar of any kind among them, but with one heart and one mind "provoke one another to love and to good works."' That shows the opinion of Wesley as to the spirit which should exist in every Methodist Society. Then, as to the administration of discipline in those distant times, we notice an event which occurred at Sunderland. After preaching there in the evening, he met the members, and told them that none could stay in the Society unless he would part with all sin—particularly robbing the King, selling or buying run goods, which he could no more suffer than robbing on the highway. This he enforced on every member the next day. A few would not promise to refrain; so these he was obliged to 'cut off.' About two hundred and fifty were of a better mind. The 'smuggling'

evil existing in Sunderland he had faced in Cornwall, and he knew the mischief it had done in the Western Societies. Strengthened by experience, he faced the evil. In the course he took he was carrying out the *Rules of the Society*. He was true to the principle that the deliberate and continued breach of any of those rules made a member liable to exclusion. He lived in the days of heroic and salutary administration.

## II

## SAMUEL WALKER

DURING the month of July, 1757, John Wesley completed his visitation of the Midland and Northern Societies. Then he made his way to London, where the Conference met on Thursday, August 4. Once more we are disappointed. The *Journal* reference to the proceedings of the Conference is brief. We know that the business occupied a week, and that conversations on important subjects occupied considerable time ; but, so far as John Wesley's *Journal* is concerned, we have to content ourselves with the assurance that ' from the first hour to the last there was no jarring string, but all was harmony and love.' But we cannot dismiss this Conference without making further inquiries. Wesley's assurance suggests that some of the subjects considered might have disturbed the calm of those halcyon days. We will put aside the *Journal* and look elsewhere for information.

Consulting the *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, we find a few sentences which show that the Conference of 1757 considered a question of finance that possesses great interest. They occur in the Life of Alexander Mather, who became conspicuous among the early preachers. John Wesley had great confidence in him. About 1754 he employed him as a leader of a band in the London Society, and also as the leader of a class. But he saw that he was fitted for still higher service. In the beginning of March, 1756, he asked him to go with him to Ireland as a travelling preacher. He consented ; but he said that if he abandoned his business his wife would be left without any maintenance. Wesley at once promised that Mrs. Mather should be provided for during her husband's absence. Mather thought it would be wise to see the stewards of the London Society and consult them on the subject. He did so. They asked him, ' What will be sufficient for your wife ? ' He answered, ' Four shillings a week.' But this small

sum they were unwilling to allow; so Mather stayed at his business. However, in August, 1757, we judge that the Conference took up the matter, and tried to make an arrangement for the support of the wives of the preachers. Mather says: 'This was the beginning of the settlement for preachers' wives; which, with the addition of four guineas a year, continues to this day.' Myles, commenting on this fact, states that before Mather's admission as a travelling preacher 'the preachers' wives and families were very badly provided for; sometimes the stewards attended to their wants, and at other times overlooked them. At all times their provision was precarious.'[1] We know that Wesley in previous years had sought to make arrangements for the maintenance of the preachers' wives and children; but Mather and Myles are right in pointing to 1757 as the time when a decisive step was taken to meet a serious difficulty.

The need of a solution of the problem of the support of the preachers' wives is revealed in a letter written by John Nelson to Charles Wesley on March 17, 1758.[2] The postscript casts light on the difficulty we are considering. Nelson's spelling is rather eccentric; but, reduced to modern English, the postscript is as follows:

> This part I would have you keep to yourself, for if I be hurt I would not have any one to be hurt with me. I think you will sympathize with me, and pray for me, for I am cut off from ever coming to Bristol or London again without God works a miracle. For that I had towards supporting my family from London is taken off, and the stewards have sent me a letter that I must expect no more help from them; and we have but ten shillings per week in all. And that is to keep a servant out of, and wages to pay to her, which takes four shillings at least out of it; and we have coals and candles for the house, and soap to find, which will take two more, and all the good of the house to find, and keep in repair, and my meat when in the Round, and in my absence another preacher for it. So that my family hath not one shilling a week to find them both meat and clothes, so that I am going to hew stone again, and I think to quit the house, for after near eighteen years' labour I find it will not be meat and clothes. O sir, pray for me that I faint not at last. This keeps my head above water, to see that God continues to convert sinners by my word, and that so many finish their course with joy. So that I think He will either provide or take us to Himself.

[1] *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ii. 171; Myles's *Chronological History*, 81, fourth ed.

[2] The letter will be found in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv. 104–105.

I desire that no one may know of this but yourself till I see how matters will turn.

This ' cry from the deep ' moves our compassion. It increases our admiration for John Nelson ; but he would have been the first to confess that other preachers also bore the cross of poverty in that day of heroic suffering.

We must now pursue our search for further light on the proceedings of the Conference. After it was held, John Wesley visited the Societies in the West of England. On September 16 we see him at Helston, in Cornwall. He had been busy among the Cornish Societies, but at last found an opportunity to write a long letter to Samuel Walker of Truro. In this letter we get information concerning an important part of the proceedings of the Conference. The paragraph from his letter we are about to quote is not to be found in the well-known third edition of his *Works*, edited by Thomas Jackson ; but we find it in an abbreviated copy of this Helston letter in the *Arminian Magazine* of 1780—that is, in a magazine which was published by Wesley.[1] The paragraph is as follows : ' At our late Conference I proposed the question, " What can be done in order to a close union with the clergy who preach the truth ? " We all agreed that nothing could be more desirable. I, in particular, have long desired it, not from any view to my own ease or honour, or temporal convenience of any kind, but because I was deeply convinced it might be a blessing to my own soul, and a means of increasing the general work of God.' This recovered paragraph establishes the fact that at least one aspect of ' the Church question ' was considered at the Conference of 1757. If the Conference confined its attention to the question stated by Wesley we can understand the harmonious character of its proceedings. But when we read the Helston letter to Samuel Walker, which deals with many other points, we find it difficult to believe that the conversation had no wider range.

We have no desire to disturb the repose of the long controversy between John Wesley and Samuel Walker. Time has given its verdict on the questions they discussed. But at this point it will be useful to make some reference to that controversy as it reveals the position of Wesley at the time when

[1] Tyerman, in his *Life and Times of John Wesley*, reproduces the magazine version of the letter. See ii. 279–281.

it occurred. It must be remembered that the correspondence between Wesley and Walker continued for several years, and that it was characterized by goodwill and courtesy. The disputants were friends; their frank declaration of their strong convictions never interfered with that friendship. Walker was a staunch and enthusiastic Church of England man; Wesley had a great regard for the Church, but was keenly conscious of its defects.

We have in our possession a letter from John Wesley to Samuel Walker dated November 20, 1755. Jackson included it in his edition of Wesley's *Works*.[1] Wesley in this case seems to have availed himself of the assistance of an amanuensis; but the letter was signed and directed by him. The following interesting postscript appears in the writing of the amanuensis: 'All but the last paragraph of this I wrote three weeks ago. But the serious illness of my wife prevented my finishing it sooner.' In the first paragraph Wesley mentions a letter which he had received from the Rev. Thomas Adam, the Rector of Winteringham, in Lincolnshire, which he had answered. In Wesley's *Works*, a letter to Adam is printed which bears the date October 31, 1755. The date strengthens our conviction that the letter to Walker was written in the same year.

In Wesley's letter to Walker we have an opportunity of seeing some of the opinions concerning the Church of England he held in 1755. We have made a reference to these opinions in our book on *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*; but we must deal more fully with this important matter at this stage. In the 1755 letter Wesley says:

1. Those ministers who truly feared God, near an hundred years ago, had undoubtedly much the same objections to the Liturgy which some (who never read their works) have now. And I myself so far allow the force of several of those objections that I should not dare to declare my Assent and Consent to that book in the terms prescribed. Indeed they are so strong, that I think they cannot safely be used with regard to any book but the Bible. Neither dare I confine myself wholly to Forms of Prayer, not even in the Church. I use indeed all the Forms; but I frequently add Extemporary Prayer, either before or after Sermon.

2. In behalf of many of the Canons, I can say little; of the Spiritual Courts, nothing at all. I dare not therefore allow the authority of the

[1] *Works*, xiii. 174. In the *Works* it bears the wrong date—'October, 1758.'

former, or the jurisdiction of the latter. But I am not yet required to do it. So that difficulty does not lie yet.

3. Whether it be lawful to attend the ministrations of one whom I know God has not sent to minister, seeing he expressly disclaims that call of God which is at least as necessary as the call of man, is really a question which, as I said before, I cannot answer to my own satisfaction. Neither can I tell.

4. How far that command of our Lord, 'Beware of False Prophets,' obliges me to refrain from hearing such, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, I am still in doubt; whether quietly attending them while they do this be not, in effect, the *bidding them God speed*, the strengthening their hands in evil, and encouraging others to hear them, till they fall into Hell together.

I am still desirous of knowing in what particular manner you think the present work of God could be carried on without the assistance of lay preachers. This I will fairly weigh, and give you my thoughts upon it.

Some little things occurred to me in reading over your sermons, which I had a desire to communicate to you. In the great points I cannot observe any difference between us. We both contend for the Inward Kingdom, the mind that was in Christ Jesus, the Image of God to be new-stamped upon the heart. I am sometimes much discouraged at finding so little of this in myself. Assist, both with your advice and prayers, your very affectionate brother and servant.

In this letter we see that in 1755 Wesley admits that he shares some of the opinions of the Nonconformists of the seventeenth century, and objects to several matters which appear in the Liturgy. He had been studying the history of the period, and had been impressed by the experiences of his grandfathers, John Westley and Samuel Annesley. He felt that the Nonconformists had been true to conscience, and that the opinions for which they had suffered could be defended. As to the Canons, he could say little in favour of many of them. He goes further when dealing with the Spiritual Courts; he has not a word of commendation for them. He confesses that he dare not allow the authority of the Canons or the jurisdiction of the courts. As to declaring his 'Assent and Consent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer,' that was impossible. We remember that before his ordination he had scruples concerning the Athanasian Creed, but subdued them. The more he studied the contents of the Book of Common Prayer the keener was his conviction that it needed stringent revision.[1] Another point arises out of the 1755

[1] In this matter he occupied the position now held by a multitude of the clergy and members of the Church of England.

letter. Dealing with the question of attending the ministry of a clergyman who makes no pretence of being called of God to the Christian ministry, he confesses that his judgement is in suspense; he cannot determine the question to his own satisfaction. We must remember that this problem confronted thousands of the members of his Societies in places where ungodly and persecuting ministers occupied the pulpits of the English Church. It is well to have such a frank unveiling of the secret convictions of John Wesley. It enables us to understand his hesitation and reticence. But the hour for open speech struck after a time; the word for which many waited was at last clearly uttered.

Turning to the letter written by Wesley when he was in Helston in 1757, we note that in it there are no signs of retreat from the position he had taken up two years before.[1] The principal point discussed in the Helston letter concerns a question which had been asked in the London Conference: 'What can be done in order to a close union with the clergy who preach the truth?' The Conference had decided that such a union was desirable, but did not devise any scheme by which it might be effected. We presume it was understood that serious difficulties were in the way, and that such a union could not be brought about without careful consideration. The number of evangelical clergy in the country at that time was small, and any union with them would affect only a few parishes. The Methodist Societies were rapidly increasing. In some towns large preaching-houses had been built. In them, as in the 'houses' in the country, congregations had been gathered together and Societies had been formed consisting of members of the Church of England, Dissenters, and persons who had not been accustomed to attend any place of worship. It had been suggested that the Methodists should withdraw from all towns and villages in which there was a clergyman 'who preached the gospel,' and that the Methodist Societies should be handed over to him. It was a startling proposal, and could not be hastily adopted. The Helston letter gives us some light on the difficulties of the problem.

It is interesting to see how this plan would have worked in Cornwall. In the Helston letter the name of Mr. Vowler occupies a prominent place. He was the curate of St. Agnes

[1] For the Helston letter, see Wesley's *Works*, xiii. 169-174.

and was one of Samuel Walker's friends. On Sunday, September 4, Wesley was in St. Agnes, and went to church twice. He was much impressed with Mr. Vowler's preaching. He describes it in striking words. He says that he preached 'two such thundering sermons as he had scarce heard for twenty years.' Mr. Vowler was delighted to see him in the congregation and invited him to his house. He went, and they had a hearty conversation with each other. This visit to Mr. Vowler had an important result. Samuel Walker heard of it from Wesley, and the news stirred him up to put a series of questions to his informant which have a strict bearing on the matter now under consideration.

Wesley, in his letter to Walker, had expressed his belief that Mr. Vowler was 'a gracious person, and a gospel minister.' This statement evoked the question, 'Why did you not, in justice to your people, leave them to him?' Wesley's reply was '(1) No one mentioned or intimated any such thing, nor did it once enter into my thoughts. But if it had, (2) I do not know that every one who preaches the truth has wisdom and experience to guide and govern a flock. I do not know that Mr. V., in particular, has. He may, or he may not. (3) I do not know whether he would or could give that flock all the advantages for holiness which they now enjoy: and to leave them to him, before I was assured of this, would be neither justice nor mercy. (4) Unless they were also assured of this, they could not in conscience give up themselves to him; and I have neither right nor power to dispose of them contrary to their conscience.'

In Walker's letter to Wesley he had declared that the Methodists belonged to Mr. Vowler 'by legal establishment.' That assertion looks strange in the light of the present day; but in the eighteenth century it was often made. Wesley's reply indicated his clearer view. He held that, so far as the law was concerned, if the members of his Societies received the sacrament from a clergyman three times a year, and attended his ministrations on the Lord's Day, they satisfied all the requirements of the law. But he was not content to ignore the fact that in his Societies throughout the country a host of people had no wish to be considered members of the Church legally established. He, therefore, asked this question, 'Do you think that the King and Parliament have a right to

prescribe to me what pastor I shall choose? If they prescribe one which I know God never sent, am I obliged to receive him? If he be sent of God, can I receive him with a clear conscience till I know he is? And even when I do, if I believe my former pastor is more profitable to my soul, can I leave him without sin? Or has any man living a right to require this of me?' He closes this part of his reply to Walker's question by asserting that, even in the case of 'gospel ministers' in England, before he could leave his Societies to them with a clear conscience all the considerations he had indicated must be weighed.

John Wesley knew the condition of opinion in the Methodist Societies throughout the country better than any other man; and he was convinced that any attempt to hand them over, even to 'gospel ministers,' would be resented. He says, 'With regard to the people: Far from thinking that "the withdrawing our preachers" from such a Society without their consent would prevent a separation from the Church, I think it would be the direct way to cause it. While we are with them our advice has weight, and keeps them to the Church: but were we totally to withdraw, it would be of little or no weight. Nay, perhaps resentment of our unkindness, as it would appear to them, would prompt them to act in flat opposition to it. "And will it not be the same at your death?" I believe not; for I believe there will be no resentment in this case, and the last advice of a dying friend is not likely to be so soon forgotten.'[1]

These quotations from the Helston letter will be sufficient to indicate the trend of this part of the correspondence between Wesley and Walker. It will be admitted that Wesley's replies to Walker's criticisms are worth consideration. But a solemn voice was soon to be heard that emphasized them. Time's solutions of difficult problems often seem to be delayed; but, now and again, it speaks quickly. Wesley's letter was dated September 16, 1757, and on July 30, 1758, Mr. Vowler died. We know nothing concerning his successor. He may have been 'a gospel minister'; if not, we have reason to be thankful for the firm stand that John Wesley took against the suggested withdrawal of his preachers from the parish of St. Agnes. The difficulties involved in Samuel Walker's proposal receive another melancholy illustration. On April 27, 1760, Walker preached his last sermon in Truro. His strength had

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiii. 170–171.

failed; it was imperative that he should rest. He sought recovery at the Hot Wells in Bristol, and in other places; but those who watched him with deep affection saw that the end was near. In December he accepted an invitation from the Earl of Dartmouth to stay with him at his residence in Blackheath. But, though nursed with great kindness and skill, it seemed impossible he could recover. A few weeks before his death he removed to a lodging near the earl's house. There he died, on Sunday, July 19, 1761, in his forty-eighth year. He had previously requested to be buried in the parish in which he should die, so he was laid to rest in the Lewisham churchyard.

In our book on *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, we have described the formation of Walker's Societies in Cornwall.[1] Those connected with St. Mary's Church, Truro, were divided into two classes, the first consisting of men only; the second, of married men, their wives, and unmarried women. What became of this Society? After Walker's removal from Truro the majority of his 'people' seceded from the parish church and met in a 'room.' The writer of an interesting article in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* tells us that these seceders formed 'the nucleus of a new Independent Society in the town.' The reason of their secession was that, with the death of Samuel Walker, 'gospel preaching' ceased to be heard in St. Mary's Church. In process of time the 'room' gave place to a Congregational chapel which was erected in 1770. We leave these incidents to the reflections of the reader.[2]

John Wesley's visitation of the Societies in Cornwall lasted until the end of September, 1757. He found much to encourage him; his *Journal* is bright with records of interesting incidents. On Tuesday, September 6, he went to Camborne, and rejoiced to hear that the gentleman who 'pressed' Thomas Maxfield no longer persecuted the Methodists, and would not allow any one else to persecute them. With his usual eagerness to record the good deeds of those who had been his opposers he tells us that during the dearth that had just occurred in the neighbourhood this influential man had relieved great numbers of the poor and saved many families from perishing.[3]

[1] See 297–298.
[2] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv. 191–192.
[3] For Thomas Maxfield's 'impressment' see *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 250-251.

We find another record which allures us. We have seen Wesley at Helston, sitting at a table and writing his famous letter to Samuel Walker. Now we find him turning over the pages of a book that has captured his attention. It had been published in 1754. Its title was *Observations on the Antiquities, Historical and Monumental, of the County of Cornwall.* We do not wonder at his interest in it. He often reminds us of Wordsworth's assertion, 'We live by admiration, hope, and love.' All who have followed him sympathetically know that wonderful things made a strong appeal to him. Sometimes they led him into speculative excursions in which we decline to follow him. But we can imagine how he would turn over the pages of this book, and revel in its descriptions of Cornish antiquities. He becomes enthusiastic in his praise of the author. He says, 'He is a fine writer, and quite master of his subject, who has distinguished with amazing accuracy the ancient Saxon monuments from the more ancient Roman, and from those of the Druids, the most ancient of all.' Modern research among the monuments of prehistoric times has made the antiquary cautious in his reference to the Druids. He would probably shake his head over the words 'amazing accuracy' in Wesley's eulogium. Still, we venture to think that his admiration of the work of the writer of the book he is reading gives us an opportunity of seeing one of the outstanding features of his character. Who was the writer? He was Dr. William Borlase, one of the fiercest persecutors of Wesley and the Methodists in Cornwall.[1]

Another incident that occurred during this visit to Cornwall enables us to see 'the living Wesley.' When he preached at Redruth on Sunday, September 18, he saw many French prisoners 'mixed with the usual congregation.' They were on *parole*, having given their word of honour not to attempt to escape. The Seven Years' War was at its height. We have seen that Wesley had enthusiastically supported the English Government in these days of bitter trial.[2] His loyalty to his own country was without a flaw; but the sight of the French prisoners roused his sympathies. In the evening he preached at Gwennap to a great congregation. It rained all the time, but none went away. We gather from one of his

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 188, 250–253.
[2] *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 316.

remarks that the French prisoners were there again. He says, 'A shower of rain will not fright experienced soldiers.' He was deeply interested in 'his friends the enemy.' He inquired about them, and of them he records 'a remarkable occurrence.' We will relate it in his own words. 'A few days ago some hundred English, who had been prisoners in France, were landed at Penzance by a cartel ship. Many of these passed through Redruth, going home, but in a most forlorn condition. None showed more compassion to them than the French. They gave them food, clothes, or money, and told them, "We wish we could do more, but we have little for ourselves here." Several who had only two shirts gave a naked Englishman one. A French boy, meeting an English boy who was half naked, took hold of him and stopped him, cried over him a while, and then pulled off his own coat and put it upon him!' That is a bright picture shining through the mirk of war.

John Wesley got back to Bristol on Saturday, October 8. He had to ride in heavy rain for several miles. He took cold, and was obliged to rest for a week. Then, on Sunday, October 16, he recommenced his work. He paid special attention to the classes. It is useful to note his comments on the condition of the spiritual work in several places in the neighbourhood of Bristol. At Kingswood he found the members 'steady, but not zealous'; his warning words have still their lesson for modern Methodists: 'It is impossible they should stand here long; they must go on, or go back.' On the Monday he was in his element among 'the honest colliers' at Coleford. He says, 'These have the zeal which their brethren at Kingswood want; in consequence of which they are the most numerous as well as the most lively Society in Somersetshire.' The next day he preached at Bradford-on-Avon. He found himself in the presence of a very different congregation. They were 'well dressed and well bred,' and yet 'the Coleford spirit' was among them; they cheered him by 'their evident hunger and thirst after righteousness.' He needed the encouragement he found at Coleford and Bradford, for the condition of the Society in Bristol was disappointing. The Society, which had consisted of nine hundred members, had shrunk to little more than half that number. Wesley, who 'lived by hope,' was much concerned. In his record of the Bristol shrinkage we hear an unusual note of depression: 'We were indeed

brought very low.' But before he left the city a new song was put into his mouth. On Friday, October 28, a solemn fast was observed; and from that time the work of God revived in Bristol.

It was during this visit that Wesley's power of endurance was severely tested. On October 25 he was riding back to Bristol after preaching at Bath and Eastcott, near Lavington, on the preceding day. Reaching Hanham, a man stopped him and told him that the school-house at Kingswood was burnt down. It was an exaggerated report. When Wesley rode up to the big school, that had cost him so much labour and disappointment, he found that, though the building had been on fire, it had wonderfully escaped destruction. The roof and the floor beneath had been damaged; the rest of the school had received but little harm. And so the cloud of a threatened calamity passed away.

When Wesley got back to London on November 7 he rejoiced to find that the revival flame which had cheered him in Bristol had also begun to shine there. It was 'increasing more and more.' This was encouraging. He visited Norwich and other places; then, when he returned from the country, he found that he had to calm a tumult caused 'by some imprudent words spoken by one who seemed to be strong in the faith.' He had the parties concerned face to face, but failed to reconcile them. From this failure modern ministers, who have tried to 'compose disputes' among good people, may receive consolation. In December he managed to secure a short rest at Lewisham, where he spent several days in finishing *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion.* He explains that it was designed for the use of all those who were under his care, but chiefly for the young preachers. In Green's *Wesley Bibliography* we get a full view of the object and the contents of this valuable collection of tracts. As to the object, Mr. Green says, 'Wesley found that many of the members of his Societies had been shaken from their steadfastness by false teachers. Anxious to protect his flock, he, like a faithful shepherd, strove to make the defences round the fold more secure. With this end in view he collected together a number of pamphlets which he judged contained pithy and forcible arguments against the several seductive teachings that were producing such disastrous results. Some of these pamphlets

were original, and had been already published; others were adapted from various writers; and all were now incorporated in a single volume.' There were thirteen tracts in all, and in the *Bibliography* their titles are recorded, and their contents are briefly described.[1]

In the Christmas week Wesley rode to Bristol. So came to an end that busy year in which he had to assume the heavy burden of the chief oversight of the Methodist Societies in this country. We have followed him with sympathy, for it is clear that much of his work was done when his health was not equal to his task. But he dwelt near the source of the healing streams of spiritual refreshment; and his perfect trust in God made him strong to face and conquer all his difficulties.

[1] Green's *Wesley Bibliography*, No. 191.

## III

## NEAR AND FAR HORIZONS

THE collection of pamphlets published by John Wesley towards the end of 1758, under the title *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion*, closes with a contribution from his own hand. It is entitled ' Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England,' and it demands special attention. It contains a clear statement of John Wesley's opinions concerning such a separation *at that time*. We have frequently directed attention to John Wesley's attitude towards the Established Church, and we must now try to understand it more clearly.

When the first Conference was held in London, in 1744, the question was asked, ' Do you not entail a schism on the Church ; i.e. is it not probable that your hearers after your death will be scattered into all sects and parties ? or that they will form themselves into a distinct sect ? ' The answer of the Conference was : ' 1. We are persuaded the body of our hearers will, even after our death, remain in the Church, unless they are thrust out. 2. We believe, notwithstanding, either that they will be thrust out, or that they will leaven the whole Church. 3. We do, and will do, all we can to prevent these consequences which are supposed likely to happen after our death. 4. But we cannot with good conscience neglect the present opportunity of saving souls while we live, for fear of consequences which may possibly or probably happen after we are dead.'[1] The decisions of the first Conference, if they had been remembered in modern controversies, would have prevented much irrelative discussion.

During the interval between 1744 and 1758 ' the thrust ' had been continuous. In many cases it had been administered, or directed, by clergymen who organized and often led the mobs that assailed the Methodists. Many of the Methodists had refused to enter churches in which they were insulted and

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 213.

repelled from the sacraments. John Wesley sympathized keenly with his persecuted people; he watched the action of the clergy with indignation. But his love for the Church of England was strong, and he was often in 'a strait betwixt two.' Then he began to find that the question of 'separation' could not be put aside until his people answered it after his death. We have indicated in *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism* some of his approaches towards a solution of the problem. In a letter to his brother, dated June 23, 1755, he mentions the case of Mr. Gardiner, who had been excommunicated by the Bishop of London for preaching without a licence. He and Charles Wesley had been threatened, in 1739, with a similar fate by Archbishop Potter; and he must have remembered that event.[1] With Mr. Gardiner's experience in view, he says in his letter to his brother: 'It is probable the point will now be determined concerning the Church. For if we must either *dissent*, or be *silent*, *actum est*! We have no time to trifle!'[2] Aware of his danger, and resolved on his course, he continued his study of the constitution of the Established Church. In 1756 he reduced the results of his investigations to writing, and prepared to publish them. But Samuel Walker, having seen his manuscript, and knowing his opinions on the defects of the Church, persuaded him to abandon his intention on the ground that his book would rouse much angry discussion. He accepted Walker's advice, but retained his opinions. He was, therefore, left in the position indicated in his letter of June 23, 1755. If the ecclesiastical authorities silenced him he would sever his connexion with the Established Church.

John Wesley went on his way, but the restlessness in the Methodist Societies respecting attendance at the churches caused him much concern. He was in no danger of forgetting the policy accepted by the first Conference. He determined to do all he could to prevent the consequences that were likely to happen after his death. So, in 1758, he published his *Reasons Against Separation from the Church of England*. Let us examine them.

Whether it be lawful or not (which itself may be disputed, being not

[1] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 305.
[2] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 86.

so clear a point as some may imagine), it is by no means *expedient* for us to separate from the Established Church :

1. Because it would be a contradiction to the solemn and repeated declarations, which we have made in all manner of ways, in preaching, in print, and in private conversation ;

2. Because (on this as well as on many other accounts) it would give huge offence to those who seek and desire occasion, to all the enemies of God and His truth ;

3. Because it would exceedingly prejudice against us many who fear, yea, who love God, and thereby hinder their receiving so much, perhaps any further benefit from our preaching ;

4. Because it would hinder multitudes of those who neither love nor fear God from hearing us at all ;

5. Because it would occasion many hundreds, if not some thousands, of those who are now united with us, to separate from us ; yea, and some of those who have a deep work of grace in their souls ;

6. Because it would be throwing balls of wild-fire among them that are now quiet in the land. We are now sweetly united together in love. We mostly think and speak the same thing. But this would occasion inconceivable strife and contention, between those who left, and those who remained in the Church, as well as between those who left us, and those who remained with us ; nay, and between those very persons who remained, as they were variously inclined one way or the other ;

7. Because, whereas controversy is now asleep, and we, in great measure, live peaceably with all men, so that we are strangely at leisure to spend our whole time and strength, in enforcing plain, practical, vital religion (O what would many of our forefathers have given to have enjoyed so blessed a calm ?), this would utterly banish peace from among us, and that without hope of its return. It would engage me for one, in a thousand controversies, both in public and private (for I should be in conscience obliged to give the reasons of my conduct, and to defend those reasons against all opposers) ; and so take me off from those more useful labours, which might otherwise employ the short remainder of my life ;

8. Because to form the Plan of a New Church would require infinite time and care (which might be far more profitably bestowed), with much more wisdom and greater depth and extensiveness of thought than any of us are masters of ;

9. Because from some having barely entertained a distant thought of this, evil fruits have already followed, such as prejudice against the clergy in general ; and aptness to believe ill of them ; contempt (not without a degree of bitterness), of clergymen as such, and a sharpness of language toward the whole order, utterly unbecoming either gentlemen or Christians ;

10. Because the experiment has been so frequently tried already, and the success never answered the expectation. God has, since the Reformation, raised up from time to time many witnesses of pure religion. If these lived and died (like John Arndt, Robert Bolton, and many others) in the churches to which they belonged, notwithstanding

the wickedness which overflowed both the teachers and people therein, they spread the leaven of true religion far and wide, and were more and more useful, till they went to Paradise. But if upon any provocation or consideration whatever, they separated, and founded distinct parties, their influence was more and more confined; they grew less and less useful to others, and generally lost the spirit of religion themselves in the spirit of controversy;

11. Because we have melancholy instances of this even now before our eyes. Many have, in our memory, left the Church, and formed themselves into distinct bodies. And certainly some of them from a real persuasion, that they should do God more service. But have any separated themselves and prospered? Have they been either more holy or more useful than they were before?

12. Because by such a separation we should not only throw away the peculiar glorying which God has given us, that we do and will suffer all things for our brethren's sake, though the more we love them, the less we be loved; but should act in direct contradiction to that very end, for which we believe God hath raised us up. The chief design of His providence in sending us out is undoubtedly to quicken our brethren. And the first message of all our preachers is to the lost sheep of the Church of England. Now would it not be a flat contradiction to this design to separate from the Church? These things being considered, we cannot apprehend, whether it be lawful in itself or not, that it is lawful for us; were it only on this ground, that it is by no means expedient.

Modern readers who examine these *Reasons Against Separation from the Church of England* will be impressed by the facts that they contain several 'open questions,' and that John Wesley fails to strike the resounding note of 'finality' in his paragraphs. But they produced considerable effect at the time of their publication. With one exception Charles Wesley approved of the *Reasons*. When endorsing them he said, 'I think myself bound in duty to add my testimony to my brother's. His Twelve Reasons against our ever separating from the Church of England are mine also. I subscribe to them with all my heart. Only with regard to the first, *I* am quite clear that it is neither expedient, nor *lawful*, for *me* to separate; and I never had the least inclination or temptation so to do. My affection for the Church is as strong as ever; and I clearly see my calling; which is, to live and die in her communion. This, therefore, I am determined to do, the Lord being my helper.'[1]

As Charles Wesley was gradually retiring into the background we must now fix our attention on John Wesley, whose

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 81–84, fourth ed.

influence with the Methodist preachers and people was becoming predominant. On Saturday, January 14, 1758, he arrived in London after his visit to Bristol. He was hoping to have a little rest; but, if disappointed, he determined to welcome work. It soon came. The following Tuesday we see him on his way to Wandsworth, that town shadowed by sad memories. It is probable that, as he rode along, he brooded over the condition of the little Methodist Society there. It had endured severe persecution and had only escaped extermination by the heroic struggles of a few faithful people. He calls Wandsworth a 'desolate place'; but he knew that deserts sometimes 'blossom abundantly.' He went on his way. News had come to him that a gentleman from America who had settled in the little town for a time wished to see him. Arriving at his house, he found that a room had been prepared for a service. He preached, and must have looked at his congregation with exceptional interest. His zeal for foreign missions had been shown by his departure for Georgia in long years before, and it flamed in his heart to the end of his life. In the little audience in Wandsworth he saw two negro servants and a mulatto who belonged to his host. He watched them as he preached, and they appeared to be 'much awakened.' The thought that came into his mind and remained there was, 'Shall not His saving health be made known to all nations?' At a subsequent service held on November 29, 1758, he had the joy of baptizing the two negroes. His memorable entry in his *Journal* is 'One of these is deeply convinced of sin, the other rejoices in God her Saviour, and is the first African Christian I have known. But shall not our Lord, in due time, have these heathens also "for His inheritance"?'

We are now in the presence of one of those incidents in John Wesley's career which remind us of the existence of an Unseen Worker who brings men together from the ends of the earth, and by their contact carries out His own profound designs. Let us retire from the crowd for a time and strengthen our faith in God by a few moments of quiet reflection. Who was this gentleman from America? What had been his history? What was the result of his association with John Wesley?

The name of the man who welcomed Wesley into his house in Wandsworth was Nathaniel Gilbert. He was the son of the Hon. Nathaniel Gilbert, who possessed a large estate in

the island of Antigua. The Hon. Nathaniel Gilbert had a second son named Francis, who will come prominently into our story. The two young men pursued different paths. Nathaniel was a planter and became the Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua. Francis was placed by his father in a large mercantile concern in St. John's, the chief town of the island, which stands at the head of one of its principal bays. Unfortunately, Francis Gilbert fell under the influence of a man who led him astray. He became so much involved in doubtful proceedings that he fled the island. For a time he found refuge in Jamaica; then he sailed to England. We watch his progress until we see him in London in contact with the Wesleys. Their influence over him was powerful. Through attending their services he was led to think on his ways. Light from the Cross, which brings new life to men, shone upon him. He became a member of the Methodist Society in London. Soon he was filled with an intense desire that his brother in Antigua should share his experience of salvation. He gathered up some of John Wesley's publications and sent them out to Nathaniel Gilbert. Among them Wesley's *Appeals* were included. They made a deep impression on his brother. They kindled in him a strong desire to have a personal interview with the author of such sane and heart-searching pamphlets. He determined to go to England. He left Antigua with his wife and some of their household servants; and that is why we have seen the little group listening to John Wesley in the house at Wandsworth.

During this visit to London, Nathaniel Gilbert often heard John Wesley preach, and we know that he also entered into the brightness of the new life. When he returned to Antigua in 1759, he told his friends and neighbours of the change he had experienced. Then he commenced to hold meetings for the religious instruction of his own slaves and those of the surrounding estates. In these meetings, at first, he confined himself to the reading of sermons and the singing of hymns. It was inevitable that he should go further. He began to do the work of an evangelist; and, as people were impressed by his exhortations, he was led to adopt the Methodist plan and to gather them into classes. Some of the members of his own family assisted him in his work; and, after a time, he had the joy of seeing a considerable number of negroes and others

who, having entered into his religious experience, wished to place themselves under his care. And so he kept on working, hidden in the distance, watched by his Divine Master's eye. During his visit to England he had been introduced to John Fletcher and had tried to persuade him to go with him to the West Indian Islands and preach 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God' to the planters and their slaves. In Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher* there is a letter that shows the result of his appeal. Writing to Charles Wesley, on March 22, 1759, Fletcher says: 'A proposal has lately been made to me to accompany Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert to the West Indies. I have weighed the matter; but on one hand I feel I have neither sufficient zeal, nor grace, nor talent, to expose myself to the temptations and labours of a mission in the West Indies; and, on the other, I believe that if God calls me thither, the time is not yet come. I wish to be certain that I am converted myself before I leave my converted brethren to convert heathen. Pray let me know what you think of this business. If you condemn me to put the sea between us, the command would be a hard one, but I might possibly prevail on myself to give you that proof of the deference I pay to your judicious advice.' We cannot profess to be disappointed with Fletcher's decision. Nathaniel Gilbert won the honour of being the first Methodist missionary. He stands at the head of a noble procession. He died suddenly in 1774, leaving behind him in St. John's, Antigua, a Society of sixty members. His work did not perish; it was threatened, but it endures.[1]

In recording the events of 1757 we tried to give some idea of the work which had to be done by John Wesley when, owing to his brother's settlement in Bristol, he became solely responsible for the supervision of the Methodist Societies throughout the country. He had to bear a burden which often taxed his strength to the uttermost. Up to the present we have followed him closely, but now we must pass by many incidents in his life and confine our attention to those events which are of exceptional importance.

On Friday, February 3, 1758, Mr. Parker, the ex-Mayor of Bedford, preached at the Foundery in London. We connect this visit with the fact that on Friday, March 10, in St. Paul's,

[1] See Bretherton's *Early Methodism in and around Chester*, 72–73; Moister's *History of Wesleyan Missions*, 111; Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher*, 36.

Bedford, John Wesley preached the Assize sermon before a very large and attentive congregation. His text was, 'We shall all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ.' The sermon was published at the request of the High Sheriff, William Cole. The judge, Sir Edward Clive, immediately after the service, sent Wesley an invitation to dine with him; but he excused himself, as he had to set out on the first stage of his journey to Epworth. On Monday, March 13, he preached in the shell of the 'new house' in his native town.

After visiting Manchester, Bolton, and Liverpool, Wesley sailed to Ireland, where he stayed for more than four months. His days, as usual, were crowded with work; and the Societies throughout the country received the inspiration of his presence and counsel. We note that on Saturday, June 17, he met Thomas Walsh in Limerick, and was saddened by seeing that his old friend was 'but just alive.' Three of the best physicians in the neighbourhood had attended him, but had given him no hope of recovery. They agreed that by straining his voice, and by frequent colds, he had contracted pulmonary consumption. The disease had reached its last stage, and was beyond the reach of human help. We seem to listen to Wesley's sigh as he wrote in his *Journal* the melancholy words, 'Oh, what a man, to be snatched away in the strength of his years! Surely Thy judgements are a great deep!' On the following Wednesday Walsh was present at the 'little Conference' held in Limerick. Fourteen preachers assembled. Wesley sums up the business transacted in these words: 'We settled all things here which we judged would be of use to the preachers or the Societies, and consulted how to remove whatever might be an hindrance to the work of God.' In a footnote the editor of his *Journal* directs a ray of light on the proceedings of the Conference. We hear Thomas Walsh pleading for a preacher against whose doctrinal opinions objection had been raised. This is what he is saying: 'Brother Davis is a wise and good man, and these objections to his phraseology will soon be done away when he becomes more acquainted with the writings of the Methodists.' Wesley was of the same opinion; and Mark Davis continued to receive appointments until 1769, when he retired from the itinerant work. On April 8, 1759, Thomas Walsh died, to the great sorrow of the Wesleys and the Societies. When he felt that the end of his

journey was in sight he went back to Ballylin, the place of his birth. Then he removed to Dublin, where he passed away. He was interred in a graveyard which was subsequently enclosed as the burial-ground of the parish of St. Nicholas Without. In this ' resting-place ' many of the early Methodists of Dublin sleep awaiting the day of resurrection ; and pilgrims still seek out the grave of Thomas Walsh, and stand there thinking quietly of that valiant soldier in the army of the Lord.[1]

Ballylin is a name that quickens the attention of all whose eyes watch the on-going ways of Methodist world-history. The place lies near the settlements of the Palatines. We do not wonder at Crookshank's statement that, in his last sickness, Thomas Walsh received the attention, not only of his own family, but also of ' the Guiers, Emburys, and Hecks.' When we described the work of Nathaniel Gilbert in Antigua we felt that the curtain hiding the Western world was beginning to move. But the names of these Palatines convince us that it will soon ascend. Who can resist the suggestions of this entry in Wesley's *Journal*, made on Friday, June 23, 1758 ?

> I rode over to Courtmatrix, a colony of Germans, whose parents came out of the Palatinate about fifty years ago. Twenty families of them settled here ; twenty more at Killeheen, a mile off ; fifty at Ballingarrane, about two miles eastward ; and twenty at Pallas, four miles farther. Each family had a few acres of ground, on which they built as many little houses. They are since considerably increased in number of souls, though decreased in number of families. Having no minister, they were become eminent for drunkenness, cursing, swearing, and an utter neglect of religion. But they are washed since they heard and received the truth which is able to save their souls. An oath is now rarely heard among them, or a drunkard seen in their borders. Courtmatrix is built in the form of a square, in the middle of which they have placed a pretty large preaching-house ; but it would not contain one-half of the congregation, so I stood in a large yard. The wind kept off the rain while I was preaching. As soon as I ended it began.

The prophetic note of this description is deepened when we remember that the preaching-house was erected through the zeal of Philip Embury, who worked on the building with his own hands.[2]

Wesley left Ireland on August 8. He reached Bristol,

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 137.
[2] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 275–276.

where the 'Yearly Conference' commenced on August 12. He says that 'it was begun and ended in perfect harmony.' We accept this assurance, but it leaves us unsatisfied. Fortunately a fuller record of this Conference has escaped the ravages of time. It appears in the Appendix to the first volume of the *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, published in 1862.[1] Having examined its contents, we shall have to wait until we reach 1765 before we get steady and continuous light on the proceedings of the Methodist Conferences.

The *Minutes* expressly state that John and Charles Wesley and thirty-six lay preachers were present. An examination of the list shows that of the lay preachers five or six served 'in one place'; that is, they were men at that time called 'local preachers.' A note is taken of the fact that fourteen 'travelling preachers' were absent. The number of itinerant lay preachers at that time was about forty-five. As we look at the men in the Bristol preaching-house we easily recognize the 'veterans'—the men who belong to the first ten years of Wesley's mission. At their head, in point of years of service, stands Thomas Maxfield; and in the group we especially mark John Nelson, John Haime, Christopher Hopper, Paul Greenwood, and William Roberts. We look in vain for Thomas Mitchell, Thomas Lee, Robert Swindells, Joseph Cownley, and Jacob Rowell. They are recorded as 'absent.' Among the 'local preachers' present, we note Francis Walker, Thomas Colbeck, and James Jones, faithful workers in their own neighbourhoods.

The Conference gave its attention, first of all, to the question, 'Who are now proposed for travelling preachers?' Fourteen names were mentioned, considered, and recorded in the *Minutes*. 'The eye that brings with it the power to see' will linger on two of these names. One of the rewards of a close acquaintance with Methodist history is that it becomes impossible to take up such a list and find it meaningless. There are two names in it that make us pause. The first is that of William Thompson, who in after-years was Wesley's successor in the chair of the Conference. The second is that of a man whom we have met in Ireland. His name is still honoured by British and American Methodists. It is enough to say that, at the Conference of 1758, Philip Embury was accepted as a

[1] The Bristol Conference of 1758 was held in the 'New-Room.'

travelling preacher. Alexander Mather, who was appointed by this Conference to Newcastle, a far-extended circuit which reached as far as Musselburgh, in Scotland, gives us welcome light on 'the prerequisites' of a Methodist preacher at the time we have reached. They were: '(1) A knowledge of God, as his God, as having pardoned all his sins. (2) A life and conversation suitable thereto. (3) A clear conviction that he was called of God to the work; otherwise he could not bear the crosses attending it. (4) Some fruit of his labour, in convincing and converting sinners.'[1] These 'prerequisites' have a familiar look; they suggest the origin of the questions concerning the 'grace, gifts, and fruit' which have come down to the present day.

The additional travelling preachers having been proposed, the Conference turned its attention to matters of discipline as they concerned both preachers and people. This section of business was increasing in strictness, and it occupied the rest of the day. On Monday, August 14, and on the next day, the Conference seriously considered two doctrines of prime importance. They were the constant themes of the early Methodist preachers, and are conspicuous in the published sermons of John Wesley. The whole of Monday was devoted to the consideration of former decisions of the Conference on the doctrine of Justification. Those decisions were closely examined and freely discussed. As a result, 'it was unanimously agreed that there was no need to retract or alter anything' that had been expressed in the previous conclusions of the Conference on that doctrine.

The next day the doctrine of 'Perfection' was fully considered. Keeping our eye on approaching years, we see the need of frank discussion on this subject. It is well known that John Wesley, in his sermons and writings, displayed great caution when dealing with this doctrine. He weighed all his words, and endeavoured to guard his people against the danger which arises from extravagant views of what was often called 'sinless perfection.' It was necessary that the preachers should come to an understanding on this subject. From the *Minutes* of this Conference it would appear that rumour had attributed to Wesley certain teaching that was directly opposed to his real convictions. In the Conference he had to defend

[1] *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ii. 178.

himself; and it is imperative that we should record the questions and answers that indicate the course and conclusion of the discussions.

*Q.* Did you affirm that perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes?

*A.* We continually affirm just the contrary.

*Q.* Do you say, Every one who is not saved from all sin is in a state of damnation?

*A.* So far from it, that we will not say any one is in a state of damnation that fears God and really strives to please Him.

*Q.* In what manner would you advise those, who think they have attained, to speak of their own experience?

*A.* With great wariness, and with the deepest humility and self-abasement before God.

*Q.* How should young preachers especially speak of perfection in public?

*A.* Not too minutely or circumstantially, but rather in general and scriptural terms.

*Q.* Have they that are perfect need of the merits of Christ? Can they pray for forgiveness?

*A.* (1) Every one may *mistake*, as long as he lives.

(2) A mistake in *opinion* may occasion a mistake in *practice* (as in Mr. de Renty).

(3) Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law.

(4) Therefore, every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation.

(5) It follows that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may well say for themselves, as well as their brethren, 'Forgive us our trespasses.'

*Q.* What does Christian perfection imply?

*A.* The loving God with all the heart, so that every evil temper is destroyed; and every thought, and word, and work springs from, and is conducted to the end by, the pure love of God and our neighbour.

The Conference closed on Wednesday, August 16, after the stations of the preachers had been settled; and John Wesley remained in Bristol for a few days. It is with a sense of relief that we see him resting in the city. There is a pause in his fight against weakness and weariness. We know the reward that comes to a man of his refined tastes when he steals away from the grating noises of life and listens to the choruses of the masters of sacred song. On Thursday, August 17, there is an entry in his *Journal* which delights us. He says: 'I went to the cathedral to hear Mr. Handel's *Messiah*. I doubt if that congregation was ever so serious at a sermon as they

were during this performance. In many parts, especially several of the choruses, it exceeded my expectation.' In a former book we have expressed the opinion that, in *The Messiah*, Handel sang the great doctrines that Wesley preached. We can understand Wesley's deep content when he listened to 'the music of the gospel' in Bristol Cathedral, and when he saw the reverent assembly that was 'content to hear Messiah's praise for Handel's sake.'[1] His reference to this visit to Bristol Cathedral is brief but full of significance. Lingering there in the present day, we re-create the scene. We watch the quiet audience; but our eyes are fixed on John Wesley. He seems to have forgotten the roar of the mob and the hardships of his life as an evangelist. That life had caused some of his most cherished friends to separate from him; its hard work had wasted his strength; its experiences had made him the close acquaintance of danger and irritating discords. Would it not be well to rest for a time? Our question is answered when we look at his firm and patient face. Then we think of other workers that have denied themselves for the Master's sake. We have come to the cathedral from the hill of St. Brendan, and we have been thinking of an Irish missionary who was well known to him—a missionary whose *Visions* anticipated those of Dante. In St. Fursa's 'dream of heaven' we have a picture that should be remembered by every man who pauses in the midst of exacting evangelistic work. St. Fursa and his angel-guide tarry to listen to the singing of the heavenly choir. 'Then, forgetful of all toil and trouble, the sound of the heavenly songs growing clearer and more melodious, it seemed to Fursa that he alone was sung to; and, wondering thereat, he said, "These songs are a great joy to hear." The angel answered, "We may not often stay to hear them thus. We are the ministers of man, and we must toil and labour in his service, lest devils corrupting human hearts should make our labour vain." Again, as the saint is still wrapped in the heavenly melody, the angel of the Lord spake, saying, "There is no sorrow in heaven save one, no mourning here, but for the lost soul of man." '[2]

After a short visit to Wales, John Wesley, on September 1, returned to Bristol. By that date the news of the fall of

[1] *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 238–240.
[2] Miss Margaret Stokes's *Three Months in the Forests of France*, 93.

Louisbourg must have reached the city. Its capitulation was an incident of great importance in the Seven Years' War. The fort had been defended with remarkable vigour by the French under their governor, the Chevalier de Drucour. Parkman says that, at the beginning of June, Louisbourg was the strongest fortress in French or British America. But Wolfe's artillery was so effective that, after a siege lasting nearly two months, the French were finally obliged to capitulate. On July 27, Amherst, the British general, and Wolfe entered the fortress in triumph. R. W. Jeffery, in his *History of the Thirteen Colonies*, tells us that shortly afterwards 'the vast fortifications were razed to the ground, and to this day there remains nothing save some few ruined casements and huge, grass-grown stones, lying in dismantled heaps upon the edge of the restless Atlantic, to mark the spot where once stood one of the greatest triumphs of Vauban's engineering art.'[1] As we watch the progress of the siege we catch sight of Lieutenant Webb, who lost an eye in one of the assaults made by the British troops. We shall meet him again in the course of this history. We also note Howell Harris's contingent of Trevecca soldiers, who fought in the great battles of Louisbourg and Quebec.[2]

On Wednesday, September 20, John Wesley rode to Bath and preached in a 'room' that would 'ill contain the congregation.' He found that the members of the Society had formed the design of taking a piece of ground and building on it a larger preaching-house. He encouraged them to proceed without delay; and so we mark a new stage of progress in the city. A month later he returned to London, reaching it cheerfully on October 21. He had been absent for nearly eight months. He did not stay there long. On October 30 he rode to Norwich, and stayed there for a few days. He met the Society, and found that the number of members had increased. On November 3, James Wheatley called on him and offered him the 'Tabernacle'—that is, offered to transfer the building to him. He hesitated to accept the offer until he had maturely considered the proposal. The consideration lasted for some weeks. On December 20 he was again in Norwich, and Wheatley repeated his offer. But Wesley was in no haste. We

[1] For the siege of Louisbourg see Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii. 52–76, Boston ed.
[2] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 319.

overhear a part of the conversation. Wesley urged the objection, 'the congregation there will not hear me.' Wheatley replied, 'Sir, you cannot tell that, unless you will make a trial.' It was arranged that the trial should be made the next day. When the news was told, many of the 'Tabernacle' people declared, 'No, he shall never come into that pulpit,' and they determined to prevent it. But their threats were vain. Wesley preached to large congregations on several days without let or hindrance. As a result, prejudice seemed to have vanished. Having weighed the matter thoroughly, he yielded to the importunity of some of the Methodist members and Wheatley's offer was accepted. On Tuesday, December 26 the lease was signed, and the transfer of the building was completed.

The eventful year 1758 brought Wesley into association with John Berridge, a well-known clergyman. He had been admitted to the Everton Vicarage in 1755. The next year the great change occurred in his spiritual experience which led him to take his place in the ranks of the evangelical clergy. Receiving a message from him, through Mr. Parker, of Bedford, Wesley set out for Everton on Thursday, November 9. He met Berridge there, and preached in the evening and the next morning at Wrestlingworth to large congregations. He also preached in the Everton Church. His notice of Berridge is full of significance. He says, 'For many years he was seeking to be justified by his works; but a few months ago he was thoroughly convinced that "by grace we are saved through faith." Immediately he began to proclaim aloud the redemption that is in Jesus, and God confirmed His word exactly as He did at Bristol, in the beginning, by working repentance and faith in the hearers, and with the same violent outward symptoms.' The closing words arrest us. They recall incidents that occurred during Wesley's first visits to Wrestlingworth and Everton; but further reference to them must be reserved.

## IV

## WORK IN WAR-TIME

THE news of the surrender of Louisbourg brought relief to the hearts of many anxious people in England ; but the relief was only temporary. The war in North America had advanced one step, but other victories had to be won before the supremacy of Great Britain in that vast continent was put beyond dispute. Quebec was not yet taken. It was still held by the French. The loss of Louisbourg was keenly felt by them ; but, immediately, the military authorities determined to strengthen the defences of Quebec and make the fortress impregnable. It was not until nearly the end of June, 1759, that the English ships and forces arrived and began the siege. But, during the opening months of the year, five battalions had arrived from France to strengthen the garrison ; and nearly all the colony troops, and the militia from every part of Canada, had been poured into the city. In addition, a thousand or more Indians had come to lend their rifles and scalping-knives to its defence. It is no wonder that the confidence of the garrison rose as the time passed by and the English fleet failed to appear. When, at last, it arrived, Quebec was ready for the assault.[1] For nearly a year Englishmen who watched the course of events in America had no reason to dismiss their anxiety.

America was not the only country towards which Englishmen turned their thoughts when estimating the dangers that threatened them during this year of supreme peril. The conviction that France was preparing to invade England became fixed in the national mind. The opinion of the possibility of such an invasion was widespread among reasonable people. Those who are acquainted with the condition of the home army at that time will not ridicule their fears. Their hope was in the fleet ; but they had to wait until nearly the end of the year before their expectations of strong

[1] Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii. 199, Boston ed.

defence were fulfilled. Those who have come under the spell of the prehistoric monuments of Brittany will have made their way to Quiberon, in Morbihan. It lies in a somewhat desolate country haunted by sad memories. But, as we look at the bay, we seem to hear the far-off sound of the guns of fighting ships struggling for victory. The battle-smoke of a November day in 1759 clouds the sky. We think of Admiral Hawke, and his gallant seamen, and their great triumph. And then our thoughts turn to England. We picture the gladness of the people who, in the long years ago, heard the news from Quiberon, and put their fears of invasion far away.

John Wesley, on New Year's Day, 1759, having received a pressing letter from Bristol, mounted his horse and rode towards the West. The next day he arrived in the city. We do not know the contents of the letter, but assume that they concerned the condition of the Society in Bristol, and the distress which was afflicting the poor. Both subjects made a special appeal to him. He tells us that the great end of his journey to Bristol was ' to examine severally the members of Society and to provide for the poor.' The examination of the Society gave him satisfaction. Then, on Sunday, January 7, he preached a sermon setting forth the claims of the poor, and his appeal secured a large collection. He returned to London. On Sunday, January 14, he resumed his usual work, and stayed there until the end of February. The fear of invasion at that time had risen to panic in London. A ' Public Fast ' was ordained, and special prayer-meetings were held. Charles Wesley wrote eight hymns for use in these gatherings. One has survived. ' Come, Thou Conqueror of the nations ' still holds a place in the *Methodist Hymn-Book*.[1] The reference in it to 'earthquakes, dearths, and desolations' reminds us of the terror of the ' Year of Jubilee,' and the sufferings of the poor in the ' Seven Years' War.' It is with special interest that we note the holding of prayer-meetings at Lady Huntingdon's house. On February 27 John Wesley preached there, and, after the sermon, administered the sacrament to those who remained. During this visit to London he also went to Wandsworth, staying there for two days, preaching in the evenings in the town, and in the mornings at Mr. Gilbert's house.

[1] Hymn 227.

On March 1 Wesley commenced his visit to the North. He did not return to London until August 7. When he got back he was thoroughly tired, 'having rode in seven months above four-and-twenty hundred miles.' It is only necessary to record a few of the incidents of this extended tour. We are especially interested in his visits to Everton. He preached there on his outward and return journeys, and was confronted with problems that reminded him of his early days in Bristol. We have emphasized the fact that, at the time we have reached, he considered that the Methodist congregations presented 'an example of orderliness and devoutness' that should be imitated by the congregations of all Churches. But, when he preached at Everton, 'the physical prostrations' which had once been familiar to him in Bristol and elsewhere were repeated, the services at Everton being especially disturbed and disorderly. It must be remembered that Berridge had recently experienced the great change of heart which comes when a man, conscious of the burden of his sins, 'sees all his sins on Jesus laid.' Sometimes that vision comes quietly as the dawn. In other cases it is at noonday that Christ appears suddenly to us in the way, and speaks the gracious words, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' The assurance, quickly given, is startling, and the sudden gladness is well-nigh unbearable. The conversion of Berridge led him to preach as he had never preached before. With overwhelming earnestness he pointed to the Cross of a Saviour, 'who taketh away the sin of the world.' John Wesley continued the message, and the physical effects produced under Berridge's preaching occurred. The scenes of twenty years ago shone once more before his eyes; and, as he journeyed, he had to face a problem that he had tried to solve, in other days, at Bristol.[1]

All who are acquainted with the history of great revivals of religion in this and other countries are familiar with the problem which engaged Wesley's attention. After much pondering he reached certain conclusions which we will record. On Sunday, November 25, 1759, he was at Everton, supplying for Berridge, who had gone to preach before the University of Cambridge. Preaching in Everton Church, he says that he observed a remarkable difference, since he was there before,

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 284–288.

in the manner of the work. 'None now were in trances, none cried out, none fell down or were convulsed; only some trembled exceedingly, a low murmur was heard, and many were refreshed with "the multitude of peace."' Commenting on the change, he says:

> The danger *was* to regard extraordinary circumstances too much, such as outcries, convulsions, visions, trances; as if these were essential to the inward work, so that it could not go on without them. Perhaps the danger *is* to regard them too little, to condemn them altogether; to imagine they had nothing of God in them, and were a hindrance to His work. Whereas the truth is: (1) God suddenly and strongly convinced many that they were lost sinners, the natural consequence whereof were sudden outcries and strong bodily convulsions. (2) To strengthen and encourage them that believed, and to make His work more apparent, He favoured several of them with divine dreams, others with trances and visions. (3) In some of these instances, after a time, nature mixed with grace. (4) Satan likewise mimicked this work of God, in order to discredit the whole work. And yet it is not wise to give up this part, any more than to give up the whole. At first it was, doubtless, wholly from God. It is partly so at this day; and He will enable us to discern how far, in every case, the work is pure, and where it mixes or degenerates.
>
> Let us even suppose that, in some few cases, there was a mixture of dissimulation—that persons pretended to see or feel what they did not, and imitated the cries or convulsive motions of those who were really overpowered by the Spirit of God; yet even this should not make us either deny or undervalue the real work of the Spirit. The shadow is no disparagement of the substance, nor the counterfeit of the real diamond.
>
> We may further suppose that Satan will make these visions an occasion of pride. But what can be inferred from hence? Nothing, but that we should guard against it; that we should diligently exhort all to be little in their own eyes, knowing that nothing avails with God but humble love. But still, to slight or censure visions in general would be both irrational and unchristian.[1]

Wesley's explanation of the disturbances at Everton should be borne in mind. Those who keep a quiet eye on the path he had to travel know that he soon would have cause to remember them. It is interesting to note that when Berridge returned from preaching before the University of Cambridge he told Wesley that, in the midst of his sermon, 'one person cried out aloud, but was silent in a few moments. Several dropped down, but made no noise, and the whole congregation, young and old, behaved with seriousness.'

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 359–360.

John Wesley spent most of the month of March in Norwich and its neighbourhood. At Colchester he was much encouraged with the state of the Methodist Society in the town. When he reached Norwich he found that the attempt to unite the members at the Tabernacle with those at the Foundery had failed. The Society at the Tabernacle had consisted of 'many hundred members'; but in a few months 'it had mouldered into nothing.' He must have felt that his hesitation to take over the lease of the building was justified. However, he made up his mind to attempt to turn failure into success. Those who are acquainted with the early history of Methodism in Norwich will admit the difficulty of the task.

On April 2 John Wesley left Norwich and spent a fortnight in Lincolnshire. At Epworth he preached in 'the new house' on April 9; and, on Easter Sunday, April 15, he preached there again in the morning. He then rode to Haxey Church, where he was much refreshed by the decency and seriousness of the congregation. He held a service in Haxey, and says that so large a congregation had never been seen there before. Then he returned to Epworth and preached in the market-place. Rain began towards the close of the sermon, but most of the people listened attentively to him until the service concluded. It was during this visit that he called on Mr. Romley, the father of the curate who had repelled him from the sacrament in Epworth Church. The old man, who had reached the age of eighty-three years, had been one of Wesley's parishioners during the time when he acted as his father's curate. They had a pleasant talk together. He says that Mr. Romley was 'lively—and sensible'; and that, when he left the house, he felt much comforted.

After his visitation of the Lincolnshire Societies, Wesley turned his face to the North. Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Flintshire, Cumberland, and Scotland were reached, and in all places the inspiration of his presence was felt. It was a heavy task for a man who was gradually getting back his physical strength. On his return journey, when he reached Newcastle, on June 4, we do not wonder that he wrote these words in his *Journal*: 'Certainly if I did not believe there was another world, I should spend all my summers here, as I know no place in Great Britain comparable to it for pleasantness.' But rest to him was an impossible luxury. The whole

burden of responsibility for the inspection of the Methodist Societies in Great Britain and Ireland lay on him, and the load was constantly increasing in weight. When he had gathered together a little strength he heard all the more clearly the voice of conscience calling him to renew his work. He obeyed. We would fain linger to depict some of the incidents of his southward journey, but we must hold our hand. One incident, however, we must record because of its relation to a series of important events which we shall have to describe. On July 17 there is this record in his *Journal*: 'At seven in the evening I preached to an immense congregation at the foot of a high mountain near Otley.' The mountain is well known to those who carry in their heart memories of Wharfedale. The Chevin will rise before them encompassed with the beauty of its surrounding scenery. But as we watch the great crowd standing on the hill, quietly listening to Wesley on that summer evening, we think of a great event that was soon to happen; an event which has given Otley a conspicuous place in the history of the Methodist Church.

John Wesley reached London on August 7, worn out with his work. On his way he had met with Henry Venn and his family at the inn at Stevenage. Again the doors of the future open before us. Venn was on his way to the north, having left Clapham and become the Vicar of Huddersfield. At that time Huddersfield was numbered among the villages of England; but Mr. Balleine reminds us that Venn's parish included a large country district and several outlying hamlets; still, the population of the whole parish was only four thousand.[1] We have no record of the conversation between Wesley and Venn at Stevenage; but the interview was of importance, as the two travellers were soon to be brought more closely together in their evangelizing work in Yorkshire.

The Conference of 1759 was held in London. It began on Wednesday, August 8, and lasted for four days. Wesley's notice of the business is brief, but much can be read 'between the lines.' He says, 'Great was the unanimity and love that reigned among us throughout; and if there were any who hoped or feared the contrary, they were happily disappointed. Is not this another token for good? Surely while we are thus

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 274; Balleine's *History of the Evangelical Party*, 72.

striving for the hope of the gospel we shall not be delivered to the will of our enemies.' He tells us that the time of the Conference was almost entirely employed in examining whether the spirit and lives of the preachers were suitable to their profession. It will be seen that such an examination might easily lead to recriminations that would disturb the harmony of the proceedings; but Wesley was determined that his preachers should deal honestly with each other, and that a practice which had been recently introduced should be continued. Myles, in dealing with this part of the business of the Conference, says: 'From this time, the moral, religious, and ministerial characters of the preachers have been strictly examined at the Conference in every year. The punishments inflicted on an offending brother are: (1) A rebuke from the President before the whole Conference. (2) The being put back on trial. (3) Suspension for a year. (4) Expulsion from the Body. These punishments are inflicted according to the nature of the offence.'[1] The method of strict examination has been improved since the days of Wesley, but, in spirit, it has been practised for more than one hundred and sixty years.

From Myles we find that the discipline of preachers was not the only subject specially considered at this Conference. He gives a brief account of an important conversation which took place on 'Christian Perfection.' Soon after the Conference, Wesley published a tract in which he gave a clearer account of the character of this conversation. It appears there was some danger that a diversity of sentiments might insensibly steal in among the preachers on the question; and so the Conference, once more, 'largely considered' it. In Wesley's tract there is a full statement concerning the decisions of the London Conference, and we shall find that they were in harmony with those we have already reported as being pronounced at the preceding Conference. It is well to record them, as they contain some variations that reveal Wesley's maturing opinions concerning a doctrine that was soon to become a subject of warm and dangerous debate in some of the Methodist Societies.

In the Preface Wesley says: 'The following tract is by no means designed to gratify the curiosity of any man. It is

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 85.

not intended to prove the doctrine at large in opposition to those who explode and ridicule it; no, nor to answer the numerous objections against it which may be raised even by serious men. All I intend here is simply to declare what are my sentiments on this head; what Christian perfection does, according to my apprehension, include, and what it does not; and to add a few practical observations and directions relative to the subject.' He then reports the statements he had made in the London Conference:

*Q.* What is Christian perfection?

*A.* The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.

*Q.* Do you affirm that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake?

*A.* I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so.

*Q.* But how can every thought, word, and work, be governed by pure love, and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake?

*A.* I see no contradiction here: 'A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake.' Indeed I do not expect to be freed from actual mistakes, till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now think at all but by the mediation of those bodily organs which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes thinking wrong till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.

But we must carry this thought farther yet. A mistake in judgement may possibly occasion a mistake in practice. For instance: Mr. de Renty's mistake touching the nature of mortification, arising from prejudice of education, occasioned that practical mistake, his wearing an iron girdle. And a thousand such instances there may be, even in those who are in the highest state of grace. Yet, where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin. However, it cannot bear the rigour of God's justice, but needs the atoning blood.

Closing his account of the discussion on Christian perfection in the Conference in London, Wesley quotes 'the judgement of all our brethren who met at Bristol in August, 1758.'[1] We are specially interested in the views expressed by Wesley in the Conference of 1759 on this subject. We have to keep an eye on coming events; we know that a time was approaching

[1] See *ante*, p. 50.

when a controversy would spring up that caused disaster to an important part of the Society in London.[1]

The 'conversations' of the Conference of 1759 were carried on at a time when London was seething with excitement. We do not know when the news of the battle of Minden reached England; but, when it arrived, it kindled intense enthusiasm. When John Wesley met Henry Venn at Stevenage, on August 7, he may have heard of the result of the fight, but when he came to London he would get particulars of the battle that would make a strong appeal to him as a patriotic Englishman. The battle was fought on Wednesday, August 1, between a French force which numbered, according to Carlyle, 51,400 foot and horse, and a British and Hanoverian army, under the command of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, which consisted of 36,000 men. In Smollett's *History of England* and in Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* we may read stirring descriptions of the encounter.[2]

There was one incident in that desperate fight that is still remembered by students of our wars. With the forces under the command of Prince Ferdinand there were six regiments, then known as the 12th, 20th, 23rd, 25th, 37th, and 51st of the British line. They still carry 'Minden' on their colours. They had received from Prince Ferdinand the order, 'You shall march on sound of drum.' They understood 'by sound of drum' the beating of their own drums. At the crisis of the battle when the day seemed lost, they sounded their drums and advanced against a mass of cavalry consisting of ten thousand horsemen. The Hanoverians followed them as second line. They passed through a murderous cross-fire of more than sixty guns, and advanced against the enemy's cavalry. Astonished at the audacity of their attackers the French furiously charged them. 'No fire till they are within forty paces' was the order that passed along the English line. There were six charges in all; but the British line, though once broken, gathered itself together and drove the cavalry back in confusion. The action lasted for about an hour. Contades, the French officer who was in command at this point, saw that the battle

[1] Students of Methodist doctrines should read Wesley's *Thoughts on Christian Perfection*, and his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. The former is dated October 16, 1759; the latter 1766. The *Thoughts* re-appear in the *Plain Account*, which work was several times revised. See Wesley's *Works*, xi. 366–446, third ed.

[2] See Smollett's *History of England*, xiv. 231–235. Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great*, vi. 39–46 (seven-vol. edition).

was lost. He said bitterly, 'I have seen what I never thought to be possible—a single line of infantry break through three lines of cavalry, ranked in order of battle, and tumble them to ruin!' There was nothing to do but to retreat. The French loss was 7,086; the allies lost 2,882, full half of it falling on the six British regiments. We can imagine the effect produced in England when the story of this victory was told. It really meant that George II might put aside his fears of losing the kingdom of Hanover, and that regiments that were sorely needed in England might return to strengthen the defence of this country. That consideration allayed the panic for a time. But 'the law of compensation' soon acted. If we look across the Atlantic on July 31, the day before the battle of Minden was fought, we shall see in the evening the failure of the attempt of Wolfe to penetrate the lines of Montcalm at the foot of the hill on which Quebec stands. He called off the attack, hoping for success under better conditions. The news travelled slowly across the Atlantic, and, for a time, men almost forgot the glory of Minden.[1]

After the Conference, John Wesley rested for a few days and then resumed his work. He visited Bedford and Everton and then went to Norwich. On August 30 he preached at the Tabernacle to 'a large, rude, noisy congregation.' Remembering their previous training, he determined 'to mend them or end them.' The next evening, after the sermon, he reminded them of two things: the one, that it was not decent to begin talking aloud as soon as service was ended, and 'hurrying to and fro as in a bear-garden'; the other, that it was a bad custom to gather into knots just after sermon and 'turn a place of worship into a coffee-house.' He therefore desired that none would talk under that roof, but go quietly and silently away. His exhortation took effect at once. On Sunday, September 2, he was pleased to observe that all went 'as quietly away as if they had been accustomed to it for many years.' When he met the Society the next day he was confronted by another difficulty. It was supposed that the Norwich Society consisted of about five hundred members; but, on making inquiry, he found that about one hundred and fifty of them did not *pretend* to meet in class. We presume

[1] The victory at Minden is still celebrated by some regiments in the British Army.

that the attempted union of the Foundery and the Tabernacle Societies accounted for such a condition of things. Wesley, therefore, explained ' the nature and use of meeting in a class.' As for those who did not meet, he says, in his *Journal*, that of them he made ' no account ; they hang on but a single thread.' On the following Sunday he met the Society again, and spoke plain words to those who were present; many were profited, and he did not know one who was offended. But he must have felt that the Norwich Society demanded firm and judicious management.

On Friday, September 14, John Wesley returned to London, and the next day went to West Street Chapel to see if his orders for its immediate repair had been carried out. The work had been commenced, but it had been found that much more must be done to the building. This is what he says : ' The main timbers were so rotten that in many places one might thrust his fingers into them. So that probably, had we delayed till spring, the whole building must have fallen to the ground.' The ' chapel ' being under repair, he was set free to visit other places near London. Then, on Friday, September 28, he reached Bristol.

John Wesley's visit to Bristol, which lasted until nearly the end of October, was marked by two memorable events. He had much public work to do, but he managed to spend some time in his ' calm retreat,' his study at Kingswood School. He says, ' All my leisure time during my stay at Bristol I employed in finishing the fourth volume of *Discourses* ; probably the last I shall publish.' It was his original intention to publish only three volumes of *Sermons*, but pressure was brought to bear on him which induced him to change his mind. Each of the first editions of ' the three volumes ' contained twelve sermons. In a second edition of the third volume he added a sermon on ' Wandering Thoughts ' ; when that was done, he thought that he had kept faith with his purchasers and had fulfilled the terms contained in his first advertisement of the forthcoming books. But once more he took up his pen. When he had written seven sermons, he paused. After thinking over the matter he came to the conclusion that he had accomplished his task. His principal design in publishing his sermons was to explain the doctrines which he and his brother preached, and to show that they were all derived from the Scriptures. After consideration

he determined that he would write no more sermons; so he filled up the fourth volume by including in it several tracts. He selected two of his own. He had prepared his 'Thoughts on Christian Perfection,' which we have mentioned; and he determined that, with his 'Advice to the People called Methodists with regard to Dress,' it should be published in the new volume. Then, he added four tracts which he had either abridged or translated from other authors. The 'fourth volume,' published in 1760, therefore contained seven 'sermons' and six 'tracts'—a fact which must be kept in mind.

The second incident of Wesley's visit to Bristol, which claims special attention, is full of interest. We do not know when the news of the battle of Quebec, and of Wolfe's victory and death, reached England. The battle was fought on September 13; and, in those days, the tidings of events in America travelled slowly across the Atlantic. But the news reached England at last, and a great load was lifted from the mind of the nation. The incidents of that struggle on the 'Heights of Abraham,' in which both Wolfe and Montcalm fell, are known to all who take an interest in the history of this country. But some of us almost forget the great fight as we try to catch sight of a boat that is stealing along the St. Lawrence River through the growing darkness. It is making its way to the landing-place from which the British troops will climb up the steep ascent to the battle-field. As we watch the boat we think of a never-to-be-forgotten incident. We hear the voice of Wolfe. He is reciting Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard.' With deep pathos he repeats the words, 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave.' Then there is silence, broken at last as he says, 'Gentlemen, I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec.' Those who wish to follow the course of the great battle should read Parkman's description of the fight. In his pages the picture stands out with perfect clearness. We can watch the movements of the two armies, the fall of the heroic generals, the deeds of valour wrought by French and British troops.[1] Though the capture of Quebec did not complete the conquest of Canada, it certainly brought great relief to the over-strained feelings of the people of England.

The news of the taking of Quebec may have reached Wesley

[1] Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii. 288–297, Boston ed.

when he was in Bristol. It will be remembered that when he was in Cornwall the condition and the kindness of the French prisoners deeply affected him. On Monday, October 15, we see him on his way to Knowle, a mile from Bristol. He had been informed that the French prisoners there were confined in a little place 'without anything to lie on but dirty straw, or anything to cover them but a few foul, thin rags, either by day or night; so that they died like rotten sheep.' Stirred by this description, he went to Knowle and ascertained the facts. They did not justify the charge brought against the authorities; but he was much moved when he saw the actual conditions in which the prisoners lived. He returned to Bristol, and in the evening he preached from the appropriate text: 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' A collection for the prisoners was made, which amounted to £18; the next day it was increased to £24. The money was spent 'on linen and woollen cloth, which was made up into shirts, waistcoats, and breeches. Some dozens of stockings were added; all which were carefully distributed where there was the greatest want.' The Corporation of Bristol bestirred itself and sent a large quantity of mattresses and blankets to Knowle for the use of the prisoners. Not content with awakening Bristol to acts of benevolence, Wesley wrote a powerful appeal which was published in *Lloyd's Evening Post*. In answer to his appeal, contributions were gathered in London and other parts of the country; and he had the satisfaction of stating that he believed, from the time of his visit to Knowle, the French prisoners were 'pretty well provided with all the necessaries of life.'

We will close our account of Wesley's experiences during 1759 by saying that, on Thursday, November 29, he was in London. It was the day appointed for the General Thanksgiving. The victories at Minden and Quebec had impressed the English people, and made them conscious of divine care. The chapel at West Street was ready for the occasion, and John Wesley preached there morning and evening. Throughout London the day was observed. Wesley's testimony is: 'I believe the oldest man in England has not seen a thanksgiving day so observed before. It had the solemnity of the General Fast. All the shops were shut up; the people in the

streets appeared, one and all, with an air of seriousness; the prayers, lessons, and whole public service were admirably suited to the occasion. The prayer for our enemies, in particular, was extremely striking; perhaps it is the first instance of the kind in Europe. There was no noise, hurry, bonfires, fireworks in the evening, and no public diversions. This is indeed a Christian holiday, a "rejoicing unto the Lord."' And the next day came the news that Sir Edward Hawke had defeated and scattered the French fleet in Quiberon Bay.

# V

## A SOUND OF ALARM

On Sunday, January 13, 1760, John Wesley preached in West Street Chapel, London. As we have said, it had been enlarged and thoroughly repaired. In his *Journal* he makes a revealing comment on this new beginning. He tells us that when he acquired the chapel, eighteen years before, he little thought the world would have borne with him so long. Then he adds the triumphant words: 'But the right hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence, therefore we endure unto this day.' The reopening of 'the chapel' was an event of great importance; but the date at the head of this chapter turns our thoughts from London and fixes them on a little town in a Yorkshire dale. Following Wesley's journeys, we have already visited it. We have seen him in Wharfedale, standing in the presence of a large crowd at the foot of the Chevin, proclaiming 'the glorious gospel of the grace of God.' We must forget West Street Chapel for a time, and try to understand an event which has given Otley a conspicuous position in the history of Methodism.

We have seen that John Wesley and the Conference had closely considered, on several occasions, the doctrine of 'Christian Perfection.' It had been examined with patience; its value had been declared; the dangers incident to its proclamation and personal profession had been pointed out; but Wesley, in 'examining' the Societies throughout the country, had seen that the practical influence of the doctrine was comparatively slight. The teaching that God was ever willing to pardon sincerely-repentant sinners was joyfully accepted; but in many places he found that the people failed to recognize the fact that the Holy Spirit could so energize them as to make them triumph over temptation and give them a constant victory over sin. He longed for the coming of a time when the Methodists would learn that 'sinning and

repenting' must not be the normal experience of a Christian. When he himself began to awake to the glory of the spiritual life, a book came into his hands that widened his horizon. Jeremy Taylor's *Rule and Exercise of Holy Living* made a deep impression on him. That book turned his thoughts to a subject that continually deepened in meaning. It is well known that he never made any claim to have reached 'perfection'; but he never lost sight of the goal. He pressed forward, longing to attain the daily approval of his sympathizing Judge. The doctrine of 'Christian Perfection' was so strongly emphasized by the early Methodists that many people think it was originated by them. That is a dangerous delusion. Since the day when Christ said, 'Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,' the standard has been set up in the Christian Church. The possibility of the sinless life has been acknowledged in the ancient and modern Church for nearly fourteen hundred years. Before the *Te Deum Laudamus* was written the cry had gone up to God, 'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.' It has been the passion-cry of thousands of those in all ages who have known their danger and their own exceeding weakness.

When we think of the great event that occurred at Otley on January 13, 1760, we call to mind certain sentences in Newman's sermon on '*Grounds for Steadfastness in our Religious Profession.*' He says: 'I suppose that every religious person is conscious of this—that he never has so profited by God's grace as he might have done; that he has never fathomed God's mercies towards him; that God is present with him to an extent, with a fullness, in a depth, which he knows not.'[1] These words are appropriate to a description of an event which we must now briefly describe.

In John Wesley's *Journal*, and in his *Short History of the People called Methodists*, we find accounts of the remarkable meeting in Otley held on January 13, 1760. It commenced at eight o'clock in the evening. About thirty persons met 'to pray, sing hymns, and provoke one another to love and good works.' The proceedings followed the usual class-meeting course. The members gave brief accounts of their religious experience. Some of them, with deep sorrow, complained of 'the burden they felt because of their consciousness of the

[1] *In Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, 350.

remains of "indwelling sin."' They declared that they saw in a clearer light than ever before the necessity of a deliverance from it. When the meeting ended, a few left the room; the rest remained to pray. 'The great and precious promises of God' had been seen so clearly that a hope had been kindled in them which had never before cheered them. One of them was desired to pray. No sooner had he commenced than a great spiritual emotion filled all hearts. It is expressly said of most of them that 'they had no doubt of the favour of God; but they could not rest while there was anything in them contrary to His nature.' The prayer-meeting continued for two hours. It was inevitable that there was much excitement; but at its close we are told that 'three believed God had fulfilled His word, and cleansed them from all unrighteousness.' The next evening the members met again for prayer. The same wonderful influence rested on them. 'One received remission of sins, and three more believed God had cleansed them from all sin.'[1]

In considering this great event, and its effect on the Methodist Societies, we will avail ourselves of John Wesley's statement concerning the far-extended influence of the Otley meetings. In 1781 he published his *Concise Ecclesiastical History*. It was in four volumes. To the fourth volume, 'A Short History of the People called Methodists' is appended; and in it we find a description of the meetings in Otley in 1760. This is what he says:

> Here began that glorious work of sanctification, which had been nearly at a stand for twenty years. But from time to time it spread, first through various parts of Yorkshire, afterwards in London, then through most parts of England; next through Dublin, Limerick, and all the south and west of Ireland. And wherever the work of sanctification increased the whole work of God increased in all its branches. Many were convinced of sin, many justified, many backsliders healed. So it was in the London Society in particular. In February, 1761, it contained upwards of three-and-twenty hundred members; in 1763, above eight-and-twenty hundred.[2]

As the subject of 'Christian Perfection' came into special prominence at this time, it will be serviceable to enlarge our knowledge of John Wesley's opinion concerning the meaning

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 365-366. [2] Wesley's *Works*, xiii. 314, third ed.

of the term and of the experience. Writing to his brother Charles, about the year 1762, he says:

Some thoughts occurred to my mind this morning which I believe it may be useful to set down: the rather because it may be a means of our understanding each other clearly: that we may agree as far as ever we can, and then let all the world know it.

I was thinking on Christian perfection, with regard to the thing, the manner, and the time.

(1) By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, ruling all the tempers, words, and actions: the whole heart, and the whole life.

I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore I retract several expressions in our hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility.

And I do not contend for the term *sinless*, though I do not object against it.

Do we agree or differ here? If we differ, wherein?

(2) As to the manner, I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by faith, by a simple act of faith; consequently in an instant.

But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.

Do we agree or differ here?

(3) As to the time, I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body.

But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before death.

Do we agree or differ here?

I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it *may be* within five years, or five months, after it. I know no conclusive argument to the contrary. Do you?

If it *must be* many years after justification, I would be glad to know how many. *Pretium quotus arrogat annus?* And how many days or months, or even years, can you allow to be between perfection and death? How far from justification *must* it be? And how near to death?

If it be possible, let you and me come to a good understanding, both for our own sakes and for the sake of the people.[1]

This letter implies some difference of opinion between the brothers on the subject of 'Christian Perfection.' Thomas Jackson says, 'What answer Mr. Charles Wesley returned to this candid and sensible letter we have no means of ascertaining. Full as he was of poetic fire, being the creature of feeling, it was not his practice to analyse doctrinal principles with logical exactness. He was far more expert at beating down spiritual pride by a pithy rebuke, administered either in prose

[1] Thomas Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 209–210.

or verse.' The letter, however, is of importance to us in view of coming events.

John Wesley left London on Monday, March 3, and did not return there until Saturday, November 8. His long absence was due to the fact that his widely-extended 'parish' demanded his constant attention. During the eight months of his absence from London, Charles Wesley sometimes supplied his place. He was assisted by John Fletcher, who did not become the Vicar of Madeley, in Shropshire, until October 17, 1760. He received other assistance. We note that on April 4 Thomas Maxfield helped him in the adminstration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Referring to this fact in a letter to his wife written on the next day, he says: 'My morning subject was, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" He was evidently set forth as crucified, both in the word and sacrament. Mr. Shirley offered to assist me; but I thought it best to spare him. Mr. Maxfield's help was sufficient.' With the assistance he received from Fletcher and Maxfield he might have spent an enjoyable time in London. He met his old friends Lady Huntingdon, Mrs. Gumley, Colonel and Mrs. Gallatin, and others; and London cast its spell on him. In the letter to his wife, from which we have just quoted, he says: 'As I shall probably take much more public care upon me than I have ever done heretofore, my office will require me to spend more time in town; PERHAPS TO SETTLE HERE.'[1] It is clear that his spirit was rising. He was looking to the future with a new confidence; but the bright sky of the morning was soon darkened by clouds.

When John Wesley had set out for the North he received a letter from Charles Wesley. It is not dated, but Thomas Jackson thinks it was most probably written early in March, 1760. It is well to reproduce it.

DEAR BROTHER,—We are come to the Rubicon. Shall we pass, or shall we not? In the fear of God (which we both have), and in the name of Jesus Christ, let us ask, 'Lord, what wouldest *Thou* have us to do?'

The case stands thus. Three preachers, whom we thought we could have depended upon, have taken upon them to administer the sacrament, without any ordination, and without acquainting us (or even yourself) of it beforehand. Why may not all the other preachers do

[1] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 173.

the same, if each is to judge of his own right to do it? And every one *is* left to act as he pleases, if we take no notice of them that have so despised their brethren.

That the rest will soon follow their example I believe; because: (1) They think they may do it with impunity. (2) Because a large majority imagine they have a right, as preachers, to administer the sacraments. So long ago as the Conference at Leeds, I took down their names. (3) Because they have betrayed an impatience to separate. The preachers in Cornwall, and others, wondered it had not been mentioned at our last Conference. Jacob Rowell's honesty I commend. Christopher Hopper, Joseph Cownley, John Hampson, and several more are ripe for a separation. Even Mr. Crisp says he would give the sacrament if you bade him. The young preachers, you know, are raw, unprincipled men, and entirely at the mercy of the old. You could persuade them to anything; and not you only; Charles Perronet could do the same, or any of the preachers that have left us, or any of the three at Norwich.

Upon the whole, I am fully persuaded, almost all our preachers are corrupted already. More and more will give the sacrament, and set up for themselves, even before we die; and all, except the few that get orders, will turn Dissenters before or after our death.

You must wink very hard not to see all this. You have connived at it too, too long. But I now call upon you to consider with me what is to be done; first, to prevent a separation; secondly, to save the few uncorrupted preachers; thirdly, to make the best of those that are corrupted.[1]

Charles Wesley does not seem to have waited for his brother's answer to his peremptory appeal. In his letter he had suggested a consultation on the subjects which had excited his alarm. Instead of waiting for it, he began writing letters to William Grimshaw and some of the 'uncorrupted' lay preachers. He could not restrain his natural impetuosity. On March 6 he wrote to Nicholas Gilbert, and the next day to John Johnson. Towards the end of the month he sent letters to William Grimshaw, John Nelson, and Christopher Hopper. In reading these letters and others written about the same time we cannot repress a feeling of regret that he wrote them. The letters are to be found in Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*,[2] and those who are interested in the questions debated at that time will form their own opinion of the character of their contents. There is one point in them which we will submit to the judgement of our readers before we quote Thomas Jackson's well-balanced verdict on Charles Wesley's action at this time. Wishing to secure the welfare of a stalwart like Christopher

[1] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 180–181. [2] See ii. 182–187.

Hopper, he draws an appalling picture of the destiny of an itinerant preacher. He says:

> What must be your end? This question ought to be asked, considered, urged, insisted on, till it be answered to your full satisfaction.
>
> Here is a poor Methodist preacher who has given up his business (his little all) for the sake of preaching the gospel. Perhaps he has got a wife, and children, and nothing to keep them. By labouring like a horse, and travelling like a post-boy, for ten or a dozen years, his strength is exhausted; yet he is able, and quite willing to do what he can still. But how shall he get bread for his family? That, Mr. Superintendent will look to.
>
> Well; be it so. Suppose neither he nor his children are starved while my brother and I live, what must he do when we depart? Our end cannot now be far off. What will then become of this old, faithful preacher? 'He must turn Dissenting or Church minister.' I grant it. There is no medium.
>
> 'But will you' (you ask us) 'now use all your interest to get him ordained?' I answer for myself, 'Yes'; and will begin to-morrow, or never blame him for turning Dissenter. Neither have I the least doubt but the porter will be commanded to open the door, and to admit, by imposition of hands, as many as have addicted themselves to God's service in the Established Church. I have more reason for believing this than is commonly known; and am assured, if our preachers do not ruin themselves and the work by their own precipitation, our Lord will take care of every one of them. If any of you prefer the service of the Dissenters, I would let you depart in peace. If your heart is as my heart, and you dare venture in the same bottom, then am I your faithful servant for the residue of my days, and bound to do all I can for you as to soul, body, and estate.

If words mean anything, the foregoing paragraphs show that Charles Wesley wished to take away some of John Wesley's most trusted helpers, and get them ordained and introduced to livings in the Church of England. In order to induce them to accept his assistance, he pointed to the prospect of poverty which awaited them if they remained in association with his brother. But he undervalued the loyalty of 'the men of the old brigade.' Including the offenders at Norwich, who were Paul Greenwood, John Murlin, Thomas Mitchell, and, probably, Isaac Brown, our records show that all the lay preachers we have mentioned in describing this controversy 'died in the work,' remaining true to Methodism to the end of their lives. In reading the letters that passed between Charles Wesley and William Grimshaw at this time, we note that each of them

threatened to cease their association with John Wesley. But that association was not broken save by the hand of death.

Before looking at another question which was discussed at this time, we will place on record Thomas Jackson's opinion of Charles Wesley's conduct at this crisis. Speaking of the letters at which we have glanced, he says:

> The following letters, addressed by Mr. Charles Wesley to different preachers, display his characteristic fear, uprightness, generosity, and love of the Established Church. They also place his warmth and impetuosity in striking contrast to the calm, practical wisdom of his brother. Charles would at once resort to decisive measures, perhaps so as to dissolve the Society at Norwich, which was known to be very intractable, and to silence the offending preachers. John would moderate and gradually check irregularities which he could not at once remove, but with the certainty of much evil. Charles would have all the preachers who were not Churchmen separated from their brethren and settled, if they chose, as Dissenting ministers, and the rest ordained as clergymen; not thinking that by these measures the Societies would be broken up, and the itinerancy destroyed. John would rather employ both classes of preachers in extending the work of God as widely as possible; deeming nothing upon earth so important as turning men from sin to holiness. . . . In reading these letters, as well as that to Mr. John Wesley, it must be remembered that the writer was a poet, and that he was not addressing the public. He does not, therefore, measure his terms, but uses the strong language to which he was professionally addicted. When he speaks of the Methodist preachers, for instance, as being 'corrupted,' he intends no reflection either upon their doctrinal sentiments or upon their moral conduct, but simply that they were alienated in affection from the Established Church; although in many instances he knew that their alienation did not arise from the principles of systematic Dissent, but from the lives and preaching of the clergy. Their 'corruption' was the desire which they sometimes expressed, that the Societies and congregations generally might have the spiritual advantages which their brethren in London and Bristol enjoyed, under Mr. Charles Wesley's own administration—the Lord's Supper in their own chapels, and divine service there on the forenoon of the Sabbath day.[1]

During Charles Wesley's visit to London another subject weighed on his mind. In his letter to William Grimshaw, written on March 27, 1760, he makes this statement; 'Our preaching-houses are mostly licensed, and so are proper meeting-houses. Our preachers are mostly licensed, and so are Dissenting ministers. They took out their licences as Protestant Dissenters. Three of our steadiest preachers give the

[1] *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 181–182.

sacrament at Norwich, with no other ordination or authority than a sixpenny licence. My brother approves of it. All the rest will most probably follow their example. What, then, must be the consequence? Not only separation, but general confusion, and the destruction of the work, so far as it depends on the Methodists.' When reading some of Charles Wesley's letters we have to bear in mind Thomas Jackson's apology for him, based on the fact that he was 'a poet.' In the statement he made to Grimshaw we see signs of the exercise of a vivid imagination. But Grimshaw accepted his description. In his reply he says that the licensing of preachers and preaching-houses was a matter that he never expected to have seen or heard of among the Methodists. But he states that since the last Conference many of the preachers in his neighbourhood had been licensed at the Quarter Sessions, and that 'several of the preaching-houses and other houses had also been licensed.' His conclusion was that the Methodists were no longer members of the Church of England; that they were as real a body of Dissenters from her 'as the Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, or any body of Independents.' Accepting Charles Wesley's statements, the truth of which seemed to be confirmed by his own observations, Grimshaw made up his mind to separate from the Methodists. He determined to remain in the Church of England, which he describes as 'the soundest, purest, and most apostolical, well-constituted national Christian Church in the world.' It is not often that we meet with such a complimentary description of the English Church in the eighteenth century. Still, in his letter to Charles Wesley he admits that the Methodist preachers and members had so much to say in favour of their separation from it as would not be easily 'obviated' in a Conference or otherwise.

In reading the letters of Charles Wesley and William Grimshaw at this crisis we have wondered if they saw that each of them was, in part, responsible for creating the position they denounced with such severity. Did Charles Wesley remember Sunday, April 12, 1741, when he and the Kingswood 'bands' were present in Temple Church, Bristol, and were again repelled from the sacrament? On that occasion his High Churchmanship was sorely tried, and gave way under the trial. He went back to Kingswood with his friends and administered the sacrament to them in the 'unconsecrated' colliers' school, and

declared that, if a house had been wanting, he would have justified the administration of the sacrament 'in the midst of the wood.'[1] That act did not stand alone. It is not too much to say that in the years before he ceased to itinerate he did much to open the path in which the Methodists afterwards walked. As to William Grimshaw, it is enough to mention the fact that, in his letter to Charles Wesley, written in 1760, he admits that he had preached, now and then, in a 'licensed house' when he was in a place 'where he was a stranger, or thought no notice would be taken of it.' The admission lacks the spirit of a high chivalry; but it shows that, when it could be done without attracting the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church of England, Grimshaw dared to preach in a 'licensed' house.

The discussions that took place in 1760, which caused Charles Wesley so much trouble of mind, bring out into clearness a subject of vital importance. The licensing of preaching-houses in certain localities had become a common practice; but the licensing of preachers was only beginning to be adopted at the time we have reached. We venture to dissent from Charles Wesley's assertion that in 1760 the preachers were 'mostly licensed.' In *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism* we showed that the newly-built 'Room' in Bristol was 'licensed' on October 17, 1748, and we recorded Charles Wesley's protest against the action.[2] But he continued to preach there, notwithstanding his conviction that the 'licensing of the Room was needless, useless, and senseless.' John Wesley did not hold that opinion. As the number of preaching-houses increased we have shown that in several places certificates of 'registration' were obtained by the trustees. Such 'registration' secured protection for the buildings. That had been made clear by the Riot Act of 1715. It contains a section making it felony, unlawfully, riotously, and with force to demolish or pull down, or to begin to demolish or pull down, any church or chapel, or any building for religious worship certified and registered under the Toleration Act of 1689; and the section declares that damages may be recovered from the hundred in which the damage to the building was done.[3] The Riot Act protected a 'registered' meeting-house,

[1] *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 32. [2] pp. 58–60.
[3] See *Laws Against Nonconformity*, by T. Bennett, LL.D., a small book of great value.

and thereby conferred a great benefit upon Nonconformists. But in 1766 a step was taken which was of great importance to the Methodists. In that year a judgement of the Court of King's Bench was delivered in an interesting case. The justices of Derbyshire had refused to register a Methodist preaching-house. One of their reasons was that as Methodists 'do not dissent from the Church of England, but only pretend to observe her doctrine and discipline with greater purity than their neighbours, it may be a very serious question how far they are the objects of the Toleration Act, and privileged to meet in conventicles.' But the King's Bench held that 'in registering meeting-houses under the Toleration Act, the justices had no discretion, but had merely a ministerial duty to perform'; and the justices were compelled to register the meeting-house. But the judgement also contained the warning that 'if the persons resorting to a registered meeting-house did not bring themselves within the Toleration Act by taking the necessary oaths, &c., such registering would not protect them from the penalties of the law.'[1]

The decision of the Court of King's Bench brought relief to those who wished to protect the preaching-houses against the assaults of riotous mobs. We must, however, note that it had no direct bearing on the question of the protection of congregations and preachers. Charles Wesley's letters to William Grimshaw raise the question of the licensing of the lay preachers, a subject which calls for close attention. It must be remembered that in 1760 the Seven Years' War still raged; press-gangs were busy, and the unlicensed Methodist preacher was their easy prey. In 1744, during the 'Young Pretender' panic, John Nelson was hurried into the army. When he appeared before the commissioners at Halifax, they found that he did not possess a licence, so they sent him to prison. Later, the preachers in Cornwall were seized and shared the same fate. The eagerness of the persecutors of the Methodists in Cornwall was so great that even John Wesley was arrested and was marched off to begin a soldier's life. However, the man who had taken him into custody came to his senses on the way to the commissioners and apologized for his mistake. Is it any wonder that the protection of a licence was secured by preachers in this dangerous period? In Charles Wesley's

[1] See Dr. Bennett's *Laws Against Nonconformity*, 219–220.

letter to William Grimshaw he says, ' Our preachers are mostly licensed, and so are Dissenting ministers.' We know that at the time when he made this statement he was getting ' out of touch ' with the lay preachers, and therefore we doubt the fullness of his knowledge concerning them. Against his assertion we may place an extract from a letter written by John Wesley on July 19, 1768. In it he declares that ' the greater part of the Methodist preachers are not licensed at all.'[1] Preferring John Wesley's statement, it is interesting to note some of the cases which have been discovered by diligent search. We find that Robert Roberts, who became an itinerant preacher in 1759, possessed a licence which he had obtained for his protection when he was a local preacher. In 1761 Thomas Lee, that valiant evangelist who suffered greatly from mob violence at Newark-upon-Trent, showed his licence to the mayor and the town clerk, and three of the rioters ' were bound over to the assizes.' Thomas Taylor, when he was brought before the mayor for making a riot in 1763, produced his licence and gave his Worship a much-needed lesson on the contents of the Act of Toleration.[2]

In John Wesley's letter, written on July 19, 1768, we get light on the manner of applying for these licences. It is assumed that the letter was written to the Rev. Thomas Adam, the Rector of Winteringham, Lincolnshire. The following paragraphs are of importance :

Rev. and Dear Sir,—One of Winteringham informed me yesterday that you said no sensible and well-meaning man could hear, and much less join, the Methodists ; because they all *acted under a lie*, professing themselves members of the Church of England, while they licensed themselves as Dissenters. You are a little misinformed. The greater part of the Methodist preachers are not licensed at all ; and several that are, are not licensed as Dissenters. I instance particularly in Thomas Adams and Thomas Brisco. When Thomas Adams desired a licence, one of the justices said, ' Mr. Adams, are not you of the Church of England ? Why, then, do you desire a licence ? ' He answered, ' Sir, I am of the Church of England, yet I desire a licence, that I may legally defend myself from the illegal violence of oppressive men.' T. Brisco being asked the same question in London, and the justice adding, ' We will not grant you a licence,' his lawyer replied, ' Gentlemen, you cannot refuse it ; the Act is a mandatory act. You have no choice.' One asked the Chairman, ' Is this true ? ' He shook his head,

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 278. *Early Methodist Preachers*, v. 23, 164.

and said, ' He is in the right.' The objection, therefore, does not lie at all against the greater part of the Methodist preachers; because they are either licensed in this form, or not licensed at all.

When others applied for a licence, the clerk or justice said, ' I will not license you but as Protestant Dissenters.' They replied, ' We are of the Church; we are not Dissenters; but if you will call us so, we cannot help it.' They did *call* them so in their certificates, but this did not *make* them so. They still *call themselves* members of the Church of England; and they believe themselves so to be. Therefore neither do these act under a lie. They speak no more than they verily believe. Surely, then, unless there are stronger objections than this, both well-meaning and sensible men may in perfect consistence with their sense and sincerity, not only hear, but join the Methodists.[1]

Charles Wesley's withdrawal from the itinerant life has caused considerable discussion; but the reason may be guessed by those who are acquainted with his correspondence. When he was a courageous evangelist he could sing:

> Ye different sects, who all declare,
> ' Lo, here is Christ! ' or, ' Christ is there! '
> Your stronger proofs divinely give,
> And show me where the Christians live.

The hymn was first published at the end of John Wesley's *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, issued in 1743.[2] The hymn describes primitive Christianity as it is revealed in the New Testament. It should be studied diligently in the present day. After describing the days when there was ' A little Church in every house,' Charles Wesley asks where he shall wander to discover the successors of the primitive Christians. He declares that the search for them was in vain. It was at this point that he made his appeal to the different sects which we have quoted. His challenge was answered by discordant cries of ' Lo, here! ' But he says:

> Your claim, alas! ye cannot prove,
> Ye want the genuine mark of love;
> Thou only, Lord, Thine own canst show;
> For sure Thou hast a Church below.

When we contrast the hymn in the *Earnest Appeal* with the

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 278–279. Articles on the Conventicle Act and its repeal appeared in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*. See xi. 82–93, 103–108, 130–137.

[2] See Wesley's *Works*, viii. 43–45, 8vo ed.

following letter which Charles Wesley wrote to Samuel Walker on August 21, 1756, we shall see that he had discovered the Church of the 'Primitive Christians.' Writing to Samuel Walker, he says:

Your last brings a blessing with it. I hope to consider it fully with my brother, who is expected every hour. I have not time to answer: only in few words.

Lay preaching, it must be allowed, is a partial separation; and may, but *need* not, end in a total one. The probability of it has made me tremble for years past; and kept me from leaving the Methodists. I stay not so much to do good, as to prevent evil. I stand in the way of my brother's violent counsellors, the object of both their fear and hate.

The Regulations you propose are the same in substance which I have been long contending for in vain. God incline my brother's heart to admit of them! I know he will not hear of *laying aside his lay preachers* in so many words. All I can desire of him, to begin is: (1) To cut off all their hopes of his ever leaving the Church of England. (2) To put a stop to any more new preachers, till he has entirely regulated, disciplined, and secured the old ones. If he wavers still, and trims between the Church and them, I know not what to do. As yet, it is in his power, if he exert himself, to stop the evil. But I fear he will never have another opportunity. The tide will be too strong for him, and bear him away into the gulf of separation. Must I not, therefore, enter my protest and give up the preachers formally to him? *Hoc Ithacus volit*: and they impatiently wait for it. The restless pains of bad men to thrust me out from the Methodists seems a plain argument for my continuing with them. I want light, would have no will of my own, but prove what is that good and perfect will of God. In my next I may have time for a more particular answer. Be so good to write again; and continue your prayers for, dear sir, your sincere tho' weak and despised Brother.[1]

If we survey the ground over which we have travelled in *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* and in this volume, we shall understand some of the reasons why Charles Wesley ceased to itinerate, and why he contemplated secession from the Methodists.

During his visit to London in 1760, Charles Wesley had an experience which deeply affected him. We have seen that on April 4 he did not accept Mr. Shirley's offer to assist him in the administration of the sacrament. At that time Mr. Shirley,

[1] For a copy of the original letter see *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xv. 70–71; Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 247–248

who was a clergyman, was in London on tragic business. He had left Ireland in order to attend the trial of his brother, Lord Ferrers, who was accused of the murder of Mr. Johnson. The day of trial was approaching ; and, out of keen sympathy, Charles Wesley would not lay any additional burden on him. When we say that Earl Ferrers was the cousin of Lady Huntingdon we shall understand that all her friends shared the burden that oppressed her. In Smollett's *Continuation of the Complete History of England* the case of Earl Ferrers is described and discussed. Looking at the murder from the standpoint of a medical man, Smollett gives an opinion that it was committed by a lunatic. That plea was raised at the trial in the House of Lords, but was not accepted. The trial began on April 16. Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and his wife were present. The next day it was continued and concluded. On April 18 sentence of death was pronounced. The execution was postponed until May 5, when it was carried into effect at Tyburn. In the procession there was a mourning-coach filled with the earl's friends. He had arrayed himself in gay attire. He expressed some displeasure at being executed as a common felon, and had written to the King asking that he might be permitted to die in the Tower, 'where the Earl of Essex, one of his ancestors, had been beheaded in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.' In his conversation with the chaplain, who was wishful to obtain some statement concerning his sentiments on religion that might be made known to the crowd, he said that he did not think himself accountable to the public for his private sentiments. He also expressed the opinion that he thought it was criminal to disturb the established religion of his country, and added that the great number of sects, and the multiplication of religious disputes, had almost banished morality. On the scaffold he refused to join the chaplain in his devotions, but he repeated the Lord's Prayer, which he said he had always admired. The end soon came. Smollett, in expressing his final opinion on the earl's mental condition, says: 'Without all doubt, this unhappy nobleman's disposition was so dangerously mischievous that it became necessary, for the good of Society, either to confine him for life, as an incorrigible lunatic, or give him up at once as a sacrifice to justice.'[1]

[1] Smollett's *Continuation*, iii. 383.

We can imagine the effect of this time of anxiety on such a sensitive man as Charles Wesley. He tried to soothe the agitated minds of Lady Huntingdon and her friends. But from Friday, January 18, when the murder was committed, to May 5, the day of execution, the strain on his emotions was continuous. It is no wonder that when he returned to Bristol his strength gave way. For almost a year following his visit to London, we have only slight records of his work.

## VI

## LOOKING WESTWARD

We must now turn from Charles Wesley and his attempt, in 1760, to prevent the departure of the lay preachers and many of the members of the Methodist Societies from the Church of England. It is difficult to ascertain the measure of his success, but it is certain that his influence was waning. When he ceased to be an itinerating minister, most of the Societies saw little of him; he lost the persuasive force of personal contact. The lay preachers, who had to face the violence of mobs, contrasted his and their position. He had the advantage of preaching in Bristol in a 'licensed' building, and was protected in the city by the strong arm of the law. The majority of the preachers throughout the country had no such defence. When Charles Wesley argued that it was wrong to seek for 'licences,' he caused thoughts to arise in the hearts of lay preachers and members of persecuted Societies. If we would seek to understand the experiences of the lay preachers in 1760 and the following years, we must read those intensely interesting volumes *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*. We shall then cease to wonder that, when Charles Wesley attacked the granting of 'licences,' and vehemently denounced any signs of secession from the Church of England, he weakened his influence with preachers and people.[1]

John Wesley left London on March 3, 1760; he did not return there until November 8 of that year. On Tuesday, March 4, he was in Birmingham. There had been disturbance in the Society, but he says: 'I rejoined several who had been long separated from their brethren; and left upwards of fifty resolved to stand together in the good old path.' In the evening he preached in the new 'house' at Wednesbury.[2]

[1] Those who are well acquainted with the history of Methodism know that mob-assaults on the Methodists continued for many years after the close of the eighteenth century.

[2] It was situated in Workhouse Lane, now known as Meeting Street.

Once more he speaks highly of the Wednesbury Methodists. He declares that 'few congregations exceed this either in number or seriousness.' At five o'clock the next morning the congregation far exceeded the morning congregation at the Foundery. Again he expresses his delight, and says: 'Hunger after the Word has been from the beginning the distinguishing mark of this people.' Looking at the on-going way, we linger for a few moments in Wednesbury. In 1760 Alexander Mather was appointed to the Staffordshire circuit. Among other places he held prayer-meetings at Wednesbury at which he gave addresses full of encouragement to penitent sinners. He exhorted them 'to believe *now*; to come to Christ *now*; without any other qualification than a sense of their own sinfulness and helplessness.' In one of these prayer-meetings there was a lad, in his sixteenth year, who had been accustomed to attend the Methodist services at Wednesbury. He listened eagerly to Mather's exhortation. He returned to his home, which was in Newton Road, Great Barr, just over the parish boundary of Handsworth. His father was a farmer and gardener. With a companion he went into his father's old barn and earnestly prayed for the forgiveness of his sins. The light came to him; he found peace through believing in a crucified Saviour. He began at once to work for the salvation of others and met with cheering success. His name was Francis Asbury.[1]

Riding towards Yorkshire, John Wesley must have often thought of the good news he had received from Otley at the beginning of the year. The influence of a great revival was beginning to be felt in places through which he passed. He seems to have arranged for a meeting of Methodists in Leeds at which he might have an opportunity of learning more about the remarkable spiritual work that was progressing in that town and its neighbourhood. The meeting was to be a gathering of those 'who believed they were saved from sin.' On Wednesday, March 12, the meeting was held, and Wesley spent the greatest part of the day in examining its members 'one by one.' In his *Journal* he gives us the result of his careful examination. He says: 'The testimony of some I could not receive; but, concerning the greatest part, it is plain (unless they could be supposed to tell wilful and deliberate

[1] See *Bishop Asbury*, by F. W. Briggs, 17.

lies), (1) That they feel no inward sin, and to the best of their knowledge commit no outward sin; (2) That they see and love God every moment, and pray, rejoice, give thanks evermore; (3) That they have constantly as clear a witness from God of sanctification as they have of justification. Now in this I do rejoice, and will rejoice, call it what you please; and I would to God thousands had experienced thus much, let them afterwards experience as much more as God pleases.'[1]

John Wesley's judgement is all the more valuable because he had been slow to believe in the possibility of a sinless life. He had advanced, step by step, to the acceptance of the position which he expresses in the foregoing paragraph. There is a great significance in the phrase 'call it what you please.' The possibility of living without committing sin should not be excluded from the aims of those who accept the command: 'Like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, ye shall be holy; for I am holy.'[2] The pursuit of holiness ennobles us. There is within us a voice that cries out after a higher, and a highest spiritual life. No one who studies Church History will doubt that in innumerable cases that cry of the soul has prevailed. Writing of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, a modern author has said:

> We are told that, historically considered, the *Imitatio* is to be viewed as a final summary of the moral wisdom of Catholicism; that it is a picture of man's moral nature; that it continually presents personal moral improvement as the first and constant aim of every individual. I do not say that any of this is untrue, but is moral the right word? Is not the sphere of these famous meditations the spiritual rather than the moral life, and their aim the attainment of holiness rather than moral excellence? As, indeed, another writer under the same head better expresses it, is not their inspiration 'the yearning for perfection —the consolation of the life out of self'? By Holiness do we not mean something different from virtue? It is not the same as duty: still less is it the same as religious belief. It is the name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit, purifying itself of these, and independent of all reason, argument, and the fierce struggles of the will, dwells in living, patient, and confident communion with the seen and the unseen Good. In this region, not in ethics, moves the *Imitatio*.

[1] *Journal*, iv. 372. [2] 1 Pet. i. 15–16.

This definition of holiness is selected from an article in the *Nineteenth Century* written by Lord Morley. It was quoted in a leading article in *The Times Literary Supplement* of September 27, 1923. In different words, but in substance, it expresses John Wesley's view of the meaning of the profound doctrine of Christian Holiness. It must be clearly understood that, although the doctrine is often called 'a Methodist doctrine,' the statement is incorrect. The doctrine was revived and emphasized in the eighteenth century by Wesley, but it has come to us from the purest ages of the early Christian Church.

On March 30 John Wesley sailed from Liverpool for Dublin. After a voyage of two days he reached Ireland, and immediately began his work. He was much encouraged by the seriousness of the large congregations that assembled during the week, and by the condition of the classes. The influence that was bringing new life to the Yorkshire Societies seemed to have reached Ireland. The Society was larger than it had been for several years, and Wesley's cheerful comment shows that he anticipated still greater spiritual success. He stayed in Ireland for five months, and was greatly encouraged by his association with its warm-hearted people.

Two incidents occurred during this visit which demand our attention. The first was of national importance; the second causes us to look away from Ireland to lands far beyond our seas. John Wesley was an ardent patriot; nothing that concerned the safety and welfare of his country was a matter of indifference to him. The Seven Years' War continued. During a previous visit he had been concerned to notice the carelessness of many Irishmen when the possibility of a French invasion was mentioned. The Government had tried to arouse them to a sense of their danger, but their warnings produced little effect. Wesley, in private, emphasized these warnings, but his efforts to prevent a catastrophe were in vain. In October, 1759, several ships under the command of M. de Thurot managed to escape the vigilance of the British commander of the fleet stationed in the Downs. They sailed from Dunkirk. The instructions given to M. de Thurot were to make occasional descents on the coast of Ireland. At first the French ships met with much misfortune, and the scheme of attack on Ireland miscarried. The ships returned to Bergen,

in Norway, and refitted. Then, in January, 1760, they sailed again with the intention of landing soldiers near Londonderry. But tempestuous weather prevailed. In spite of storms, the little fleet managed to reach the islands that lie off the west coast of Scotland. Provisions had run short, and soldiers and sailors were in danger of starvation. The lack of food was supplied by the islanders. At last the ships sailed from Isla and reached Carrickfergus, a town on the shores of Belfast Lough. On February 21 six hundred soldiers were landed from the ships.

In Smollett's *Continuation* of his *History of England*, published in 1760, we have an account of the raid ; that account may be supplemented by the description contained in John Wesley's *Journal*.[1] At this point we will follow Smollett's account. He says :

> Lieutenant-Colonel Jennings, who commanded four companies of raw undisciplined men at Carrickfergus, having received information that three ships had anchored about two miles and a half from the castle, which was ruinous and defenceless, immediately detached a party to make observations, and ordered the French prisoners, there confined, to be removed to Belfast. Meanwhile, the enemy, landing without opposition, advanced towards the town, which they found as well guarded as the nature of the place, which was entirely open, and the circumstances of the English commander, would allow. A regular attack was carried on, and a spirited defence made, until the ammunition of the English failed : then Colonel Jennings retired in order to the castle, which, however, was in all respects untenable ; for besides a breach in the wall near fifty feet wide, they found themselves destitute of provision and ammunition. Nevertheless, they repulsed the assailants in their first attack, even after the gate was burst open, and supplied the want of shot with stones and rubbish. At length the colonel and his troops were obliged to surrender, on condition that they should not be sent prisoners to France, but be ransomed by sending thither an equal number of French prisoners from Great Britain or Ireland : that the castle should not be demolished, nor the town of Carrickfergus plundered or burned ; and on condition that the mayor and corporation should furnish the French troops with necessary provisions.

In the Carrickfergus fight an incident occurred which is described by Smollett. We agree with him when he says that it deserves to be transmitted to posterity as an instance of that courage, mingled with humanity, which constitutes true heroism. While the French and English soldiers were hotly

[1] See *Continuation* of Smollett's *History*, iii. 390–395 ; Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 380–383.

engaged in one of the streets, a little child ran playfully between them, having no idea of the danger to which it was exposed. A common soldier of the enemy, perceiving that the child's life was at stake, grounded his piece, advanced deliberately between the lines of fire, took up the child in his arms, and conveyed it to a place of safety. Then, returning to the firing line, he lifted up his musket, and, as Smollett says, 'resumed his hostility.' The triumph of the French was short-lived. Hearing the news of the defeat of Conflans at sea, and of the assembling of a strong British Army in Ireland, they returned to their ships and set sail. But on February 28 an English fleet engaged them, and they were forced to surrender after losing three hundred men. The loss on the side of the English did not exceed forty men killed and wounded.

On Monday, May 5, John Wesley preached in the market-place in Belfast. He then rode to Carrickfergus. A furious east wind blew in his face, but he reached the town. He received an invitation from Mr. Cobham, a merchant, to lodge in his house, and willingly accepted it when he understood that M. de Cavenac was still there. He was a lieutenant-colonel in the French Guards who had taken a conspicuous part in the late action, and was detained in Carrickfergus by a severe wound he had received in the fight. From Mrs. Cobham Wesley received a vivid description of the battle. Then he was introduced to the French officer. With him he had an interesting conversation. Wesley could speak French, but to his relief he found that M. de Cavenac could converse in Latin, 'pretty readily.' And so they talked together. Wesley found his new acquaintance 'not only a very sensible man, but thoroughly instructed, even in heart religion.' On May 6 they had a long conversation on a subject of intense interest. It concerned 'not only the circumstances, but the essence of religion.' The French officer listened to Wesley's description of the experiences that lie at the heart of the Christian religion. Now and then, with emotion, M. de Cavenac said, 'Why, this is my religion : there is no true religion besides it ! ' There is much that fascinates us in this incident so briefly described by Wesley. It seems to foretoken a time when conversations, not so much on the 'circumstances' as on the 'essence' of religion, will allay the discord of the Churches, and bring Christian people together into a closer unity.

Glancing over the records of John Wesley's visit to Ireland in 1760, we come upon a notice of supreme interest. It occurs in connexion with a visit to Limerick, where he held 'a little Conference' on Saturday, July 5. Ten preachers were present. The numerical returns showed that there were in Connaught a little more than 200 members; in Ulster 250; in Leinster, 1,000; and in Munster, 600—in all, 2,050 members. In reporting these numbers, Crookshank says: 'In Limerick itself, however, there had been a considerable decrease, through a lack of life, zeal, and activity. In hope of quickening the members here, Wesley preached in the old camp to more than twice the usual congregation, which on the two following evenings was more numerous still and equally attentive, including a little army of soldiers, and not a few of their officers. Thousands assembled at the concluding service, filling all the lower ground, and completely covering the surrounding banks.'[1]

With many thoughts in his mind, Wesley visited the Palatine settlements in the neighbourhood of Limerick. He was deeply affected by their condition. On July 16, he says, 'I rode to Newmarket, which was another German settlement; but the poor settlers, with all their diligence and frugality, could not procure even the coarsest food to eat and the meanest raiment to put on, under their *merciful* landlords, so that most of these, as well as those at Ballingarrane, have been forced to seek bread in other places, but the greater part in America.'[2] Wesley's mention of Ballingarrane arrests us. We think of Philip Embury and his Methodist associates in that place. In a pamphlet written by Dr. Lewis R. Streeter, who has closely considered the origin of Methodism in America, we find the following names of some of the emigrants who sailed from Limerick on board the *Perry*, under the command of Captain Hogan. He says that the following 'Irish-German members of the Ballingarrane Society were on board: Philip Embury and his wife; Embury's brothers, Peter, David, John, and their wives; Paul Heck and his wife, Barbara; Jacob Dulmage, his wife, and Jacob, their adult son; and Valentine Tetler.'[3] We know that before the ship sailed, Embury, standing on the *Perry*, preached his farewell sermon to Palatines and others

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 146–147.
[2] *Journal*, iv. 397–398.
[3] *Review of Question of Priority*, 12. See also Dr. Abel Stevens's *History of American Methodism*, 34, abridged ed.

who had assembled on the quay of Limerick harbour. Then the ship set sail. She arrived at New York on August 10, 1760. At this point we lose clear sight of Embury for some years. He became a communicant at Trinity Church, New York. At a later stage we shall meet him again.

John Wesley sailed from Dublin for Chester on August 24. He had considerable difficulty in obtaining a passage to England. On the voyage, which lasted about three days, the ship was twice becalmed. The delay interfered with his arrangements. The Conference had been summoned to meet in Bristol. When he landed, his difficulties increased. Horses broke down, and the condition of the roads prevented haste. Dr. Hunt says: 'In 1760 English roads were little better than they were a century before; mere trackways, which in parts were sloughs in winter and scored with deep ruts in summer. Travelling over them was slow and often dangerous.'[1] Arthur Young complains bitterly of the roads over which he travelled in 1769–1770. One turnpike-road was a bog, with a few flints scattered on top, another was full of holes and deep ruts, and on one of his journeys the road was so narrow that when he met a wagon, the wagoner had to crawl between the wheels to come to help him lift his chaise over a hedge. It was not until the last quarter of the eighteenth century that good roads became general. We can imagine Wesley's disappointment as he thought of the preachers waiting for him in Bristol. However, he got there on August 28. The preachers had waited for him from the beginning of the week. Another difficulty arose. He had arranged to set out for Cornwall on the following Monday, so he had to get the business of the 'Annual Conference' into two days. The editor of his *Journal* considers that this seventeenth English Conference was 'one of the shortest, perhaps the shortest,' that Wesley held. Myles, ever eager to indicate a point bearing on the constitutional system of Methodism, says: 'This circumstance clearly shows there could be no Methodist Conference while Mr. Wesley lived, unless he were present, or had appointed the person who held it.'[2]

On Monday, September 1, John Wesley set out from Bristol

[1] *The Political History of England*, x. 259.

[2] Myles's statement must be read in the light of the fact that at the Conference of 1780, which began on August 1, the preachers, in Wesley's absence, made Christopher Hopper the president until Wesley arrived. See *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 219.

on a visitation of the Cornish Societies, and did not return there until October 3. An event, during his stay in the city, stands out with exceptional clearness. From his Oxford days to the end of his life he was interested in the English prisons. In 1760 it is not too much to say that most of them were in a loathsome condition; but we have seen the beginning of a change in London.[1] That change was conspicuous in Bristol. In the *Bristol Chronicle* it was reported that 'a charity sermon was preached in the afternoon of October 16, in Newgate, for the relief of the poor debtors.' John Wesley's *Journal* shows the name of the preacher. Wesley not only preached, but inspected the prison. His report is of national importance. As a prelude we will quote an extract from his letter to the *London Chronicle*, written on January 2, 1761. 'Of all the seats of woe on this side hell, few, I suppose, exceed or even equal Newgate. If any region of horror could exceed it a few years ago, Newgate in Bristol did; so great was the filth, the stench, the misery, and wickedness, which shocked all who had a spark of humanity left. How was I surprised, then, when I was there a few weeks ago!'

He then proceeds to give the following account of his visit:

What a change is in this place since I knew it first! (1) Every part of it, above stairs and below, even the pit, wherein the felons are confined at night, is as clean and sweet as a gentleman's house: it being a rule that every prisoner wash and thoroughly cleanse his apartment twice a week. (2) Here is no fighting or brawling. If any think himself aggrieved, the cause is immediately referred to the keeper, who hears the contending parties face to face, and decides the affair at once. (3) The usual grounds of quarrelling are taken away, for it is very rarely that any one cheats or wrongs another, as being sure, if anything of this kind is discovered, to be more closely confined. (4) Here is no drunkenness suffered, however advantageous it might be to the keeper and tapster. (5) Nor any whoredom, the women prisoners being narrowly observed, and kept apart from the men, and no women of the town being now admitted, no, not at any price. (6) All possible care is taken to prevent idleness. Those who are willing to work at their callings are provided with tools and materials, partly by the keeper, who gives them credit at a moderate profit, partly by the alms occasionally given, which are divided with the utmost impartiality. Accordingly at this time, a shoemaker, a tailor, a brazier, and a coachmaker are all employed. (7) On the Lord's day they neither work nor play, but dress themselves as clean as they can, to attend the

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 132.

public service in the chapel, at which every person under the roof is present. None is excused unless sick, in which case he is provided both with proper advice and medicines. (8) To assist them in spirituals as well as temporals, they have a sermon preached every Sunday and Thursday. And a large Bible is chained on one side of the chapel, which any of the prisoners may read. By the blessing of God on these regulations, the whole prison has a new face. Nothing offends either the eye or ear, and the whole has the appearance of a quiet serious family.[1]

Wesley's description of the change effected in the Bristol Newgate was published in the *London Chronicle*, and must have excited the envy of the men and women who, at the hazard of their lives, were accustomed to care for neglected prisoners. Among them the Wesleys and other Methodists occupy places of high distinction. In addition to his visit to Newgate, John Wesley went to Knowle to ascertain the condition of the French prisoners. He found many of them almost naked again. He preached a 'charity sermon' in the New Room in the Horsefair on a Sunday evening at eight o'clock, and made a collection for the prisoners; he gave orders that the money should be laid out in linen and waistcoats, which were given to those most in want.

It was during John Wesley's visit to Cornwall that an event occurred of great national importance. The news would travel slowly, but when he was in Bristol it must have arrived and become a topic of exciting conversation. When Wolfe gained his great victory over Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham the end of the war in Canada came into view, but Montreal still remained in possession of the French. Early in the spring of 1760, a French army of more than eight thousand men marched towards Quebec to attempt its recovery; but, although the English garrison only numbered about three thousand men, it marched out of the gates of Quebec and bore the assault. There was a desperate fight; and the small English force was compelled to retreat into the city. Famine set in; it seemed as if capitulation was inevitable. But, on May 9, Brigadier Murray who was in command of Quebec was told that a ship-of-war was beating up the river and making for the town. The news spread. The ramparts overlooking the St. Lawrence were crowded with officers and men. The question was, 'Would the ship show the red flag of England or the white flag

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 416–417.

of France?' The British colours were flying on Cape Diamond. Then, on the stranger ship, a flag rose slowly to the masthead. The wind unfolded it; and the garrison saw the red cross of St. George. She was the British frigate *Lowestoffe*. She anchored before the Lower Town and saluted the garrison with twenty-one guns. In a week's time she was joined by the *Vanguard*, a ship of the line, and the frigate *Diana*. There were six French vessels higher up the river under the command of 'the gallant Vauquelin.' The British ships attacked them. Parkman says that Vauquelin did not belie his reputation. He fought his ship with persistent bravery till his ammunition was spent, refused even to strike his flag, and, being made prisoner, was treated by his captors with distinguished honour. The other vessels made little or no resistance. One of them threw her guns overboard and escaped; the rest ran ashore and were burned. As the French vessels contained stores of food and ammunition for the troops besieging Quebec, their commander at once raised the siege, leaving much of his artillery behind him, and all his sick and wounded. The news of the victory was sent to England. When it became known, it was received with astonishment. Horace Walpole expressed the common surprise when he said America was 'like a book one has read and done with; but here we are on a sudden reading our book backwards.'[1]

The successful defence of Quebec added much to the strength of the British hold on Canada. But, so long as Montreal was in the hands of the French, Canada could not be considered as conquered. But Amherst, who had distinguished himself at Louisbourg, was making his way through the wilderness; and, in the morning of September 6, after overcoming the risks of the rapids, his troops landed at La Chine, nine miles from Montreal. He then advanced and encamped above the town; the next morning Murray and his troops arrived and camped below it. The Marquis de Vaudreuil, the French Governor of Canada, was with the troops in Montreal. Its defence was impossible; on September 8 he signed the capitulation. 'By it Canada and all its dependencies passed to the British Crown. French officers, civil and military, with French troops and sailors, were to be sent to France in British ships. Free exercise of religion was assured to the people of the colony,

[1] Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii. 356–358, Boston ed.

and the religious communities were to retain their possessions, rights, and privileges. All persons who might wish to retire to France were allowed to do so, and the Canadians were to remain in full enjoyment of feudal and other property, including negro and Indian slaves.'[1]

The conquest of Canada was hailed in England with general applause. But there, and elsewhere, shrewd men saw that it might have a grave effect on the relation of the American colonies to the Government of England. The invasion by French troops, and by their Indian allies, would become terrors of the past. The defence by British troops would no longer be needed. Questions began to be asked, which, in a few years, received vehement replies.

We will close the record of this remarkable year by saying that, on Saturday, October 25, 1760, King George II died suddenly. He was in his seventy-seventh year. He was succeeded by his grandson, George III, whose long reign did not end until the beginning of 1820. John Wesley's record of the death of George II is somewhat difficult to understand. In his *Journal*, on October 25, he writes, 'King George was gathered to his fathers. When will England have a better prince?' We know that Wesley was distinguished for his loyalty to the reigning monarch; but if the word 'better' refers to the King's moral character, and his devotion to the interests of England, we wonder at the question. But, perhaps, he was thinking of the King's attitude towards himself and the Methodist people. So far back as 1741 the King had determined to stop the rioters in London who were attacking the Wesleys. When the report of these outrages was mentioned in his Council, the King was indignant. He declared that 'no man in his dominions should be persecuted on account of religion while he sat on the throne.' That declaration was made known to the Middlesex magistrates, and the persecution of Methodists by mobs gradually ceased in London.[2] The declaration of the King probably influenced the magistrates in some of the largest towns, such as Bristol and Newcastle-on-Tyne; but as we have shown, it had little effect elsewhere. John Wesley never forgot the action of George II in 1741, and he may have thought of it in Bristol when he heard the news

[1] Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii. 374, Boston ed.
[2] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 39–40.

of the King's death. He must have been encouraged when he learned that George III, in his first speech from the throne, had given his people the strongest assurances 'that it was his fixed purpose, as the best means to draw down the divine favour on his reign, to countenance and encourage the practice of true religion and virtue, and maintain the Toleration inviolable.'[1]

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 85.

## VII

## SUNSHINE AND CLOUD

In the tenth volume of *The Political History of England* we find an estimate of the influence of Methodism in England at the time we have now reached. The volume was written by Dr. William Hunt, a clergyman, who is well known to present-day students of ecclesiastical and political history. Dr. Hunt says:

Between 1760 and 1801 the national Church, the proper instrument of national reformation, was passing through a period of transition. Its vitality was somewhat injured by its controversy with the deists, and still more by the action of the State. It was a powerful political engine, and as such it was used by statesmen. Convocations remained silenced, and Church preferments were made to serve political ends, and were regarded both by clergy and laity as little more than desirable offices. Clergymen begged bishoprics and deaneries of Newcastle with unblushing importunity, sometimes even before the men they aspired to succeed had even breathed their last. Neither they, nor the ministers who treated Church patronage as a means of strengthening their party, were necessarily careless about religion. Newcastle and Hardwicke, for example, were religious men, and the personal piety of some preferment-seeking bishops is unquestioned. It was a matter in which the Church was neither better nor worse than the age. The ecclesiastical system was disorganized by plurality and non-residence; the dignified clergy as a whole were worldly-minded, and the greater number of the rest were wretchedly poor. The Church was roused to a sense of its duty to society by Methodism and evangelicalism, two movements for a time closely connected, though after 1784 Methodism became a force outside the Church. By 1760 the persecution to which John Wesley and his fellow workers had sometimes been exposed was over and Methodism was gaining ground. It very slightly touched aristocratic society, chiefly through the efforts of the Countess of Huntingdon, who, in spite of her quarrel with Wesley's party, must be regarded as one of the leaders of the movement; its influence on the labouring class, specially in large towns and in the mining districts, was strong, and it gained a considerable hold on people of the middle class.[1]

[1] *The Political History of England*, x. 264.

Dr. Hunt's position as a clergyman of the Church of England gives the paragraph we have quoted exceptional value. Its importance arises from the fact that it gives us insight into the condition of the Church of England during forty years of the eighteenth century, and explains, to some extent, its attitude towards Methodism. The Methodist reader will be surprised at some of its statements. He will wonder what Dr. Hunt means when he says, ' After 1784 Methodism became a force outside the Church ' ; but, passing by that sentence, he will pause at the assertion that the persecution of John Wesley and his fellow workers ceased in 1760. It is true that the increasing respect of English people for John Wesley led to a gradual diminution of mob violence in his case. In the course of years it ceased ; but, as we have said, the persecution of his ' fellow workers ' continued for many years beyond the close of the eighteenth century.

The year 1761 brought Wesley abundance of work. We will confine our attention to its outstanding incidents. On January 20 he visited Yarmouth, going there from Norwich. In Norwich he had made inquiries about Yarmouth, and had received alarming accounts of its condition. He was told that the town was as eminent for ignorance and wickedness as any seaport in England. This description attracted him, and he determined to visit the place. But cautious people warned him against making any attempt to preach there. He was told that some had endeavoured to call the people to repentance, ' but it was at the hazard of their lives.' That description had no terrors for Wesley, and he determined to go to Yarmouth. He knew that Howell Harris's regiment had been in the town during the previous summer, and that Harris had preached there ' night after night.' Standing in the crowd in his ' regimentals,' Harris was protected from attack, none daring to make him afraid. As a consequence of his services many people were ' stirred up to seek God.' Knowing that Wesley was in Norwich, some who had been impressed by Harris's preaching sent an earnest request that he would visit the town. That message determined him to attempt the ' forlorn hope.' In the evening of January 20 he preached in ' a house ' which was ' more than filled.' Instead of the tumult which was expected, ' all were as quiet as at London.' The next day he preached at six o'clock in

the morning. At eleven he preached his 'farewell sermon.' At these services he saw not one who was not 'deeply affected'; but we seem to hear his sigh when he writes in his *Journal*, 'Oh, fair blossoms! How many of these will bring forth fruit unto perfection?' Returning to Norwich, he made an attempt to reduce 'the lambs at the Tabernacle to order.' His task was lightened by the fact that many of Wheatley's former congregation had left the Society. He tried to persuade himself that 'all jealousies and misunderstandings had vanished,' and that the people were, at last, 'well knit together'; but he rejoiced with trembling when he remembered 'the unparalleled fickleness of the people in those parts.' Quitting the city, he rode to Lakenham, and preached to a large congregation. Finding that no Society had been formed there, he proceeded to remedy that serious defect. His task was comparatively easy, for many of the people expressed their willingness to meet in class.

John Wesley returned to London on February 7, and stayed there until March 9. He was much encouraged by finding that the revival that had commenced at Otley had deeply affected many of the London members. He journeyed North, and found that the work was spreading among the Societies in Staffordshire. His hopes brightened. Reaching Leeds on March 23, he met a number of the preachers in conference in the evening and the next morning. He inquired into the state of the Societies in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, and his record is: 'I find the work of God increases on every side, but particularly in Lincolnshire, where there has been no work like this since the time I preached at Epworth on my father's tomb.' He must have felt disappointed at the absence of Grimshaw, whom he had specially invited to attend this conference of Yorkshire preachers. We have seen that Charles Wesley's letters had made a considerable impression on him; but Grimshaw's excuse for his absence was that he objected to the wild and unscriptural views on Christian perfection which some of the preachers held. As Wesley's object in holding this special conference was to correct these errors and to give instruction which would lead the preachers into scriptural views of this profound doctrine, we wonder why Grimshaw missed this great opportunity of assisting his old friend.

On March 24, before he left Leeds for Manchester,

John Wesley wrote a letter to Christopher Hopper. In it we get light on two subjects. He says: 'My best friend (such she undoubtedly is, in a sense) remains still in London. I do not expect any change till the approach of death. And I am content. With regard to me, all is well.' Those who are acquainted with the history of his married life will be able to understand his allusion. We are more particularly interested in the postscript added to this letter. In it there is a note of alarm which we rarely hear in Wesley's correspondence. It awakens us to the fact that a great peril was threatening some of the Methodist Societies at this time. To a man whom he trusted Wesley writes: 'Alas! Alas! So poor Jacob Rowell says, "Mr. Wesley has nothing to do with his round," and that "all the Societies in it but Barnard Castle are willing to separate." In God's name, let one of you go into that round without delay!'[1]

We are surprised to see that Jacob Rowell led the way in the attack on Wesley's right to govern the Methodist circuits and Societies; but it is certain that the subject was being discussed. We shall see that in 1763 and 1766 the question was raised in the Conference. It must be remembered that in some places Wesley's attempt to secure the attendance of the Methodists at the sacramental services in the Church of England made them restive. They would willingly have received the sacrament from the hands of their own preachers, but they declined to attend churches in which their presence was resented. Many of those who attended the churches did so out of respect for Wesley's opinions and directions, but they hoped for the coming of a day when they would cease to approach the Lord's table as unwelcomed guests. We think, however, that Jacob Rowell's statement that, with the exception of Barnard Castle, all the Societies in his circuit were 'willing to separate,' suggests 'separation from the Church of England' rather than ceasing all connexion with Wesley and the Methodist Societies.

On March 24 Wesley took horse early and rode to Huddersfield, where he breakfasted with Henry Venn. We know nothing of the subjects of their conversation, but can surmise them. After visiting several of the Societies in Lancashire, Wesley set out for Scotland. On April 28 he met his steadfast

[1] John Wesley's *Works*, xii. 289.

friend, Christopher Hopper, in Edinburgh. They rode to Dundee, were storm-bound for a day, and then passed through Montrose to Stonehaven. In this town they met an old friend, Dr. Memyss, a medical man, who was to be Wesley's host in Aberdeen. Those who follow Wesley's work with care often find a quickening of their belief in Providence. If we are to understand the reason of Wesley's visit to Aberdeen we must go back to Wrexham, that town in North Wales which is distinguished by the majestic tower of its church. It was in Wrexham that Dr. Memyss joined the Methodist Society. About 1747 he settled in Aberdeen, and became a member of the congregation under the charge of the Rev. John Bisset, who is described as 'an evangelical minister' of one of the churches of the city. In 1756 Mr. Bisset died. Being in London, Dr. Memyss waited on John Wesley, and represented to him the pressing need for evangelical preaching in Aberdeen. In response to his appeal, Wesley sent Christopher Hopper to Scotland. After forming a Society in Dundee, he went on to Aberdeen and Peterhead, remaining in Aberdeen during the years 1759–1760.[1]

John Wesley's visit to Aberdeen must have made a deep impression on his mind. He was accustomed to discourtesy and assault, but in Aberdeen he was received with honour. When he arrived on Saturday, May 2, he sent a message to the Principal of Marischal College, Dr. George Campbell, asking for permission to preach in the College Close. It was at once granted. When he reached the College it began to rain, and he was desired to go into the hall, where he preached to a large congregation. At the early morning service the next day, notwithstanding the continued rain, a large congregation met him in the hall. On that Sunday he went to the kirk and heard two useful sermons; one was preached by Principal Campbell and the other by the Divinity Professor, Dr. Alexander Gerard. On that Sunday Wesley preached to a 'huge multitude' in the College Close, and all who could hear 'seemed to receive the truth in love.' After this service he met the Methodist Society, and added about a score of members to the little company. The next day, before noon, twenty more persons came to him asking for admission to the Society. After these interviews,

[1] See *Sketch of Methodism in Aberdeen*, by C. D., 1901, quoted in a note in Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 449.

about noon, he took a walk to the King's College, in Old Aberdeen. He thought it not unlike Queen's College, in Oxford. As he went up to see the hall he noticed a large company of ladies with several gentlemen. He says: 'They looked and spoke to one another, after which one of the gentlemen took courage and came to me. He said: "We came last night to the College Close, but could not hear, and should be extremely obliged if you would give us a short discourse here." I knew not what God might have to do, and so began without delay on "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." I believe the word was not lost; it fell as dew on the tender grass.' In the afternoon, as he was walking in the library of the Marischal College, the Principal and the Divinity Professor came to him. Dr. Gerard invited him to his lodgings, and they spent a pleasant hour together. In the evening he preached to a great crowd of eager people who were ready 'to trample each other underfoot' in their desire to hear him. They came under the spell of his voice; the crushing ceased; they listened as 'if they would devour every word.' On Tuesday, May 5, he accepted the Principal's invitation, and spent an hour with him in his house. The interview was most friendly. Wesley was charmed with 'the easy good breeding of a man of sense and learning.' At the evening service in the hall the Principal and all the professors were present. There was a great crowd, and Wesley asked that all the windows might be set open. Even then the hall was 'as hot as a bagnio'; but the attention of the people was fixed on the preacher. The next day he dined at Mr. Ogilvie's, one of the Aberdeen ministers, and says: 'A more open-hearted, friendly man I know not that I ever saw. And, indeed, I have scarce seen such a set of ministers in any town of Great Britain or Ireland.' In the evening he stood once more in the College Close and preached to an earnestly attentive congregation. Then he summed up the result of his visit to Aberdeen in the words: 'I have now "cast" my "bread upon the waters"; may I "find it again after many days"!'

John Wesley's visit to Aberdeen gave him new inspiration for his work in Scotland. As he rode towards Edinburgh he must have felt that his store of pleasant memories had been increased. When he reached the city, on May 9, the law of compensation acted. He had designed to preach near the

Infirmary on the Sunday, but was informed that some of the managers 'would not suffer it.' Changing his intention, he went on Sunday to the 'Room' in which the Methodists were accustomed to meet, and preached there morning and evening. His notice of the services indicates his surprise at the presence of some of 'the rich and honourable' of the city in the congregations. He bears them witness that they endured 'plain dealing,' whether they profited by it or not.

Wesley left Scotland and spent several weeks in the North of England. We are especially interested in the important interviews with William Grimshaw and with Henry Venn that took place in July. They had a direct bearing on the future of Methodism in Yorkshire. We have mentioned the fact that Grimshaw was not present at the special conference held in Leeds in March. He had written to John Wesley apologizing for his non-attendance. In his letter he mentioned the two most material points that threatened to sever his 'happy relation' with the Methodist Connexion—'Imputed Righteousness' and 'Christian Perfection.' We cannot forget that in his correspondence with Charles Wesley he had also expressed himself strongly on the question of the severance of the Methodists from the Church of England, and had declared his intention of ceasing to act in union with John Wesley if he encouraged the movement towards separation. But it would appear from his letter to John Wesley that the doctrines of 'imputed righteousness' and 'sinless perfection' were the most material points on which he differed from the Methodists. A correspondence took place which ended in his being convinced that, so far as John Wesley and the Conference were concerned, their views were in harmony with his own. The upshot was that he declared his determination to continue in close connexion with Wesley 'even unto death.' So far as his work was concerned, he stated his intention to be as useful as he was able, or was consistent with his parochial and other indispensable obligations, chiefly in the Haworth 'round,' and at times abroad.[1]

On Sunday, July 12, John Wesley preached in Haworth to a great crowd. The church would not contain the people, who had come from all parts; but Grimshaw had provided for this difficulty. He had fixed a scaffold outside one of the

[1] See Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 291–293.

windows, which enabled Wesley to quit the church after the prayers had been read in the morning. The people streamed into the churchyard and listened to the sermon. In the afternoon the congregation was still larger. Wesley might well say: 'What has God wrought in the midst of those rough mountains!' The next morning he preached once more, taking for his subject 'the manner of waiting for perfect love.' He selected this subject to satisfy Grimshaw, 'whom many had laboured to puzzle and perplex about it.' 'So once more,' he says, 'their bad labour was lost, and we were more united, both in heart and judgement, than ever.' After this morning's service at Haworth, Wesley went to Colne, a town which was once 'inaccessible to the gospel.'[1] He preached in a yard which could not contain the people. He expresses an opinion that he might have preached at the Cross without the least interruption. The next morning he preached at a place near Haworth on 'Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Grimshaw told him afterwards 'that this perfection he firmly believed and daily prayed for; namely, the love of God and man producing all those fruits which are described in our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount.'

We must now refer to the interviews with Henry Venn, which took place during Wesley's visit to Yorkshire. Venn's ministry in Huddersfield was very successful. His church was crowded. During the week he statedly visited the different hamlets in his wide parish. His biographer says it was his custom in these visitations to collect some of the inhabitants at a private house, whom he addressed 'with a kindness and earnestness which moved every heart.' It is no wonder that his success led him to believe that the work of the Methodists was not needed in his parish. In previous interviews with John Wesley he raised the subject and made suggestions which if adopted would have ended Wesley's connexion with this district in Yorkshire. We always watch Wesley with care when he has to face such proposals when made by a friend. With his foes he was firm; with his friends he sometimes reveals a weakness of determination which surprises us. In two letters to Ebenezer Blackwell, of Lewisham, he tells him of the course and the conclusion of his interviews with Henry Venn. Writing from Bradford on July 16, 1761, he says:

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 99–106.

Mr. Venn was so kind as to come over hither yesterday, and spend the evening with us. I am a little embarrassed on his account, and hardly know how to act. Several years before he came to Huddersfield, some of our preachers went thither, carrying their lives in their hands, and with great difficulty established a little, earnest Society. These eagerly desire them to preach there still; not in opposition to Mr. Venn (whom they love, esteem, and constantly attend), but to supply what they do not find in his preaching. It is a tender point. Where there is a gospel ministry *already*, we do not desire to preach; but whether we can leave off preaching because such an one comes *after* is another question; especially when those who were awakened and convinced by us beg and require the continuance of our assistance. I love peace, and follow it; but whether I am at liberty to purchase it at such a price I really cannot tell.

While writing this letter it is no wonder that Wesley's thoughts turned towards his old friend Samuel Walker, with whom he had discussed the question of the removal of the preachers from some of the Cornish towns. He mentions him in his letter to Blackwell, and expresses his sorrow at the news that he is near death. He soon heard that Walker had died at Blackheath on July 19, and he sorrowed at the thought that when there was so great a want of faithful labourers such a man should be removed.

The final result of the conversations with Venn is given by Wesley in a letter to Blackwell dated August 15, 1761. He says: 'Mr. Venn and I have had some hours' conversation together, and have explained upon every article. I believe there is no bone of contention remaining, no matter of offence, great or small. Indeed, fresh matter will arise, if it be sought; but it shall not be sought by *me*. We have amicably compromised the affair to preaching. He is well pleased that the preachers should come once a month.'[1] Wesley was satisfied with the arrangement; but compromises seldom end such debatable matters. We look forward a few years. In 1771 Henry Venn accepted the rectory of Yelling, in Huntingdonshire. What effect did his departure from Huddersfield produce? His biographer shall give the reply.

After Mr. Venn left Huddersfield, the people who had profited by his preaching were repelled from the parish church by discourses which formed a marked contrast to those they had lately heard within the same walls; so that they were dispersed in various directions, some to neighbouring churches, some to dissenting chapels. Several of them

[1] For letters to Blackwell, see Wesley's *Works*, xii. 174–175, 8vo ed.

at length determined upon building a chapel, in the hope that they might be united together in one body, under a pastor of their own choice. Mr. Venn gave his sanction and assistance to this plan, and advised the people to attend the chapel after it was built. It was his first hope that the Liturgy would be used in the new chapel at Huddersfield. Writing to a friend, he says, 'You, and all the people, know how I love the Liturgy, and would a thousand times prefer it to any other way of worship.' But in this, and in many more important respects, his expectations were disappointed. In a short time, also, another vicar came to the living, from whose instructions he would never have wished his people to secede; but few, comparatively, returned to the parish church.[1]

On August 22 John Wesley returned to London, having been absent from the city since March 9. He spent a fortnight there, and then went to Bristol. During his brief stay in London he must have seen that the Societies there needed his special care. He tells us that during this visit he had to guard 'both the preachers and people against running into extremes on the one hand or the other.' It is clear, from Myles's explanation, that these 'extremes' related to the revival of the great doctrine of 'Christian Perfection.' He says that they were: '(1) Despising this work altogether, on account of the extravagancies of some who were engaged in it. (2) Justifying all those extravagancies, as if they were essential to it.'[2] In this balanced statement we see a revelation of Wesley's own attitude towards the revival. Wesley says, in another place, 'The work of God was swiftly increasing. Meantime the enemy was not wanting in his endeavours to sow *tares* among the good seed. I saw this clearly, but durst not use violence, lest in plucking up the *tares* I should root up the wheat also.' He had an opportunity of counselling the preachers at the Conference which assembled in London on Tuesday, September 1. The *Minutes* of this Conference seem to have been taken by Thomas Johnson and John Jones, but both versions are lost. From other sources we find that Whitefield and other clergymen attended on several occasions, but Charles Wesley was not present. In 1761 he was in a very unsatisfactory state of health. He was laid aside from his public work, and had to retire to Bath and seek restoration there. From a casual reference to the business of the Conference contained in a letter to him, written by John Wesley

[1] *Life of Henry Venn*, edited by the Rev. Henry Venn, B.D., 168.
[2] Myles's *Chronological History*, 86, fourth ed.

on September 8, we judge that the question of the relation of the Methodists to the Church of England was once more considered. The letter contained the following paragraph: 'I do not at all think, to tell you a secret, that the work will ever be destroyed, Church or no Church. What has been done to prevent the Methodists leaving the Church you will see in the *Minutes* of the Conference. I told you before with regard to Norwich, *dixi*. I have done at the last Conference all I can or dare do. Allow me liberty of conscience, as I allow you.'[1]

After a visit to Bristol and the Societies in the neighbourhood John Wesley returned to London on October 31. We read the records of his visit to the West with interest. In Bristol he had the satisfaction to observe 'a considerable increase of the work of God.' The congregations were exceedingly large. Glancing over the year's work, he says: 'It seems God was pleased to pour out His Spirit this year on every part both of England and Ireland, perhaps in a manner we have never seen before, certainly not for twenty years.' It must have cheered him, during his visits to Kingswood, to find both the Society and the school 'in a flourishing state.' As to the school, his long patience at last was being rewarded.

At the beginning of November Wesley faced the difficulties that were springing up in the London Societies. He began a course of sermons at the early morning services on Monday, November 2; and on Monday, December 21, he retired to Lewisham and wrote *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection*. The pathetic entry in his *Journal* must have been written some time after 1761. It is as follows: 'Had the cautions given herein been observed, how much scandal had been prevented! And why were they not? Because my own familiar friend was even now forming a party against me.' On December 29 there is an entry in the *Journal* that prolongs this doleful note. He says: 'In order to remove some misunderstandings, I desired all parties concerned to meet me. They did so, all but Thomas Maxfield, who flatly refused to come. Is this only the first step towards a separation? Alas for the man! Alas for the people!' Wesley, when the meeting was over, wrote the words we have now quoted from his *Journal*. They were written with great sorrow of heart, and with a consciousness of approaching danger.

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 476–477; Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 197.

## VIII

## A VISIT TO IRELAND

THE year 1762 was long remembered in England. It marks the close of the 'SEVEN YEARS' WAR.' The year began with an event which seemed to suggest that the struggle might be long continued; but, as a fact, that event tended to shorten it. Spain, entering into an alliance with France, invaded Portugal, a country that was in close alliance with Great Britain. But a counter-stroke was delivered that did much to end the war. The English fleet sailed to the West, and harried the Spanish possessions in America. The attack was so successful that France wearied of the war. In November the plenipotentiaries of England, France, and Spain met and agreed on preliminaries of peace. Parkman, stating the essential points of the arrangement, says:

France ceded to Great Britain Canada and all her position on the North American continent east of the River Mississippi, except the city of New Orleans and a small adjacent district. She renounced her claims to Acadia, and gave up to the conqueror the island of Cape Breton, with all other islands in the Gulf and River of St. Lawrence. Spain received back Havana, and paid for it by the cession of Florida, with all her other possessions east of the Mississippi. . . . In the West Indies, England restored the captured islands of Guadeloupe, Marigalante, Desirade and Martinique, and France ceded Grenada and the Grenadines, while it was agreed that of the so-called neutral islands, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Tobago should belong to England, and St. Lucia to France. In Europe France restored Minorca and England restored Belleisle; France gave up such parts of Hanoverian territory as she had occupied, and evacuated certain fortresses belonging to Prussia, pledging herself at the same time to demolish, under the inspection of English engineers, her own maritime fortress of Dunkirk. In Africa France ceded Senegal, and received back the small island of Gorée. In India she lost everything she had gained since the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle; recovered certain trading stations, but renounced the right of building forts or maintaining troops in Bengal.

On the day when the preliminaries were signed, France made a secret

agreement with Spain, by which she divested herself of the last shred of her possessions on the North American continent. As compensation for Florida, which her luckless ally had lost in her quarrel, she made over to the Spanish Crown the city of New Orleans, and under the name of Louisiana gave her the vast region spreading westward from the Mississippi towards the Pacific.[1]

These preliminaries were embodied in the definitive treaty concluded at Paris on February 10, 1763. When reading them we seem to be watching the unveiling of a new world. We think of General Oglethorpe in Georgia and his troubles with the Spaniards in Florida. Then we recall the stories of the results of his absence from Savannah when his presence there might have prevented much of the mischief that befell John Wesley. But these recollections become dim as we look out upon the immense wildernesses that spread westward to the Mississippi. Then even that vision fades as we remember the fact that soon the western boundary of the country occupied by the emigrants from Europe will be the waves of the Pacific. It is impossible to realize the vastness of the country that came into the possession of Great Britain as the result of the Treaty of Paris. Still less can we understand its vastness at the present time. Professor Pollard has tried to assist us. He says: 'The area of U.S., excluding Alaska and overseas possessions, is over three million square miles. The density of England's population is 700 per square mile. If the United States became as populous, it would contain over 2,000 million people; more than the present population of the world.'[2] And this great country was soon to become a mission-field in which Methodism has won some of its most remarkable victories.

John Wesley, little dreaming of what awaited his preachers and Societies in America, went on steadily with his work. On Friday, January 1, 1762, a great meeting of the Societies in London was held in the Spitalfields Chapel. Nearly two thousand members were present at the Covenant Service. We note that in the administration of the sacrament Wesley was assisted by John Berridge, the Vicar of Everton, Thomas Maxfield, who had been ordained by Dr. Barnard, the Bishop of Londonderry, and Benjamin Colley. Benjamin Colley was a

[1] Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii. 405–406, Boston ed.
[2] *Factors in American History*, 2, *note*.

Yorkshireman, who had united himself to the Methodists in 1761. He also had received episcopal ordination and had been invited by Wesley to London, where he officiated as a clergyman in the Methodist chapels. Wesley rejoiced at the assistance he received at this service from three ordained men.[1] On January 12 he reached Norwich, and four days later he transcribed the names of the members of the Methodist Society in that city. His record should be considered. He says: 'Two hundred of them I made no account of, as they meet no class. About four hundred remained, half of whom appeared to be in earnest.' Norwich was still his difficulty, but that place did not stand alone. Returning to London, he was confronted by the danger that was causing anxiety to many of the most reliable members there. On February 5, as was his custom, he met at noon 'those who believed they were saved from sin.' On this occasion he found it necessary to warn them 'of the enthusiasm which was breaking in, by means of two or three weak though good men, who, from a misconstrued text in the Revelation, inferred that they should not die.' His record of this 'warning' deepens our regret that at this time it was necessary for him to be so frequently absent from London. Mischief was working in the Societies there which was soon to reveal itself in a startling manner. But, when he had finished transcribing the list of the members in the London Society, we find him enjoying the sunshine of a pleasant fact. When he had finished the list he says: 'It never came up before to two thousand four hundred: now it contains above two thousand and seven hundred members.'

On March 12 the National Fast was observed all over London with great solemnity. Wesley took part in the services of the day, being convinced that 'even the outward humiliation of a nation may be rewarded with outward blessings.' Three days later, 'not without regret,' he left London and commenced his prolonged journeys through the country Societies. He did not return until August 19. When he came back he had to make this discouraging entry in his *Journal*: 'As I expected, the sower of tares had not been idle during my five months' absence.'

On April 3 John Wesley sailed from Parkgate for Ireland, on board the *Nonpareil*, a ship commanded by Captain Jordan,

[1] Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 78; Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 482, *note*.

whom he knew. We can understand his regret at leaving London, but we must remember that Ireland called for special attention at this time. He had not been there for nearly two years ; and, from the accounts he had received, certain matters in some of the circuits there demanded his personal attention. On April 4 he landed at Dunleary and preached in Dublin in the evening.[1] His visit to Dublin cheered him. Whatever may have happened in other parts of Ireland, Dublin Methodism was in a state of spiritual prosperity. It was Eastertide. The congregations throughout the week were ' uncommon,' and the visitation of the classes brought Wesley great comfort. On Sunday, April 18, the *Journal* entry is : ' As often as I have been here I never saw the house thoroughly filled before.' The next day he left Dublin, looking back with satisfaction on the days he had spent there.

As we follow Wesley in his visitation of the Societies in Ireland, we find that the reports which had reached him and caused him anxiety were, in some cases, justified. Arriving in Newry, on April 19, he found that ' offences ' had broken the Society in pieces, and only thirty-two members were left out of nearly a hundred. When he came to Carrickfergus the congregation was small. The violent rain kept away the delicate and curious hearers. Departing from his usual custom, he delayed the early morning service till a quarter before nine o'clock. But his experiment failed. The time fixed was too early for ' a great part of the town, who could not possibly arise before ten.' At Newtownards he found another ' poor shattered Society,' reduced from fifty to eighteen members. But he faced the difficulties there ; and when he said ' farewell ' he rejoiced to know that the Society had been increased in number. He left between thirty and forty members ' full of desire and hope and earnest resolutions not to be almost, but altogether, Christians.' Later in his visit to Ireland he went to ' poor dead Portarlington.' His explanation of the condition of the people in that place throws light on the weakness of some of the Societies in Ireland at that time. He says : ' And no wonder it should be so while the preachers coop themselves up in a room with twenty or thirty hearers.' He set them an

[1] In Wesley's *Journal*, at this point, a record of William Grimshaw's death is inserted. It commences with the words, ' It was at this time that Mr. Grimshaw fell asleep.' It contains a long description of Grimshaw's work and character. It is difficult to account for Wesley's mistake. Grimshaw died a year later, on April 7, 1763.

example. He went straight to the market-place, and there cried aloud : ' Hearken ! Behold a sower went forth to sow.' His action had an immediate effect. On Sunday, July 18, at the five o'clock morning service, the room was crowded. At eight o'clock he went into the market-place and preached on the appropriate text : ' How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? ' The people listened with ' solemn attention.'

The inspiration of Wesley's example was needed in Ireland at that time. In 1762 the country was in a very disturbed condition. It must be remembered that the Methodists began their mission in what may be called the Roman Catholic section of the island. They had to stand the brunt of the fierce assaults of Roman Catholic and Protestant mobs. Shortly before the stage we have reached, events occurred which must have led to an increase of their danger. In Munster, the largest province of Ireland, which contains the six counties of Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford, wild excitement prevailed. A peasant association, known by the name of the ' Whiteboys,' had been formed, which continued to disturb the country for many years. In 1762 acts of great cruelty and outrage were committed, and the Government appointed a special commission for the trial of members of this association. A strong attempt was made to repress its proceedings ; but the attempt had only a partial success. The influence of the example of the Whiteboys lasted through many sorrowful years, as those who have followed the fortunes and misfortunes of Ireland with sympathy know full well.

In John Wesley's *Journal* we have an account of the ' Whiteboy ' movement in its earliest stage. It enables us to understand its influence in Munster, and to draw our conclusions as to its effects on the Methodist work in the south-west of Ireland. On Monday, June 14, 1762, Wesley was in Cork, and procured ' an exact account of the late commotions.' He says :

About the beginning of December last, a few men met by night near Nenagh, in the county of Limerick, and threw down the fences of some commons, which had been lately enclosed. Near the same time others met in the county of Tipperary, of Waterford, and of Cork. As no one offered to suppress or hinder them, they increased in number continually and called themselves Whiteboys, wearing white cockades and white linen frocks. In February there were five or six parties of them, two or three hundred men in each, who moved up and down, chiefly in the

night; but for what end did not appear. Only they levelled a few fences, dug up some grounds, and hamstrung some cattle, perhaps fifty or sixty in all. One body of them came into Clogheen, of about five hundred foot and two hundred horse. They moved as exactly as regular troops, and appeared to be thoroughly disciplined. They now sent letters to several gentlemen, threatening to pull down their houses. They compelled every one they met to take an oath to be true to Queen Sive and the Whiteboys; not to reveal their secrets; and to join them when called upon.[1] It was supposed eight or ten thousand were now actually risen, many of them well armed, and that a far greater number were ready to rise whenever they should be called upon. Those who refused to swear they threatened to bury alive. Two or three they did bury up to the neck, and left them where they must quickly have perished had they not been found in time by some travelling by. At length, toward Easter, a body of troops, chiefly light horse, were sent against them. Many were apprehended and committed to jail; the rest of them disappeared. This is the plain, naked fact, which has been so variously represented.[2]

There can be no doubt that the terror created by the Whiteboys in Munster affected other parts of Ireland. On April 27 Wesley preached at Clonmain, in the north of Ireland. Two days later he rode to Monaghan. Describing his experiences in that tour, he says that the commotions in Munster had alarmed all Ireland. Then he describes his adventure in Monaghan. Hardly had he and his companions alighted from their horses when some who saw them hastened to the provost and informed him that three 'strange sort of men' had come to the King's Arms. In a hurry the provost summoned his officers and hastened with them to the inn. Wesley was just coming out of the door; but the provost ordered him back into the house. Then he was subjected to a severe examination, and matters began to look serious. But he remembered that he had with him two letters he had lately received, one from Dr. Barnard, the Bishop of Londonderry, and the other from the Earl of Moira. The provost read them carefully; then he apologized for the trouble he had given, and wished Wesley a good journey. Wesley was amused at the incident; but if he had not kept the letters he and his companions might have had to spend some time in prison.

Notwithstanding the disturbed condition of the country, Wesley continued his work. In some places he found reasons

[1] In a note in Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 507, it is explained that Sive Oulteagh was the assumed name of the Whiteboys' chieftain.

[2] Wesley's *Journal*, iv. 507–508.

for regret; in others, he was made glad by the signs of steady prosperity. It is only necessary that we should indicate two places in which he met with great encouragement during this visit. On Saturday, May 29, he rode to Limerick. The next day he preached in 'the old camp.' He tells us that the pleasantness of the place, the calmness of the evening, and the convenient distance from the town, all conspired to draw the people together. They flocked from every quarter. At this service many military officers as well as abundance of soldiers were present and behaved with the utmost decency. On the following evenings he preached at the same place. He says that he did so, in great measure, for the sake of the soldiers, it being within a musket-shot of the place where they were exercising. On two of the evenings an officer ordered a large body of soldiers to exercise on the very spot; but when Wesley began his services the troops were ordered to lay down their arms. They then joined the rest of the congregation. The soldiers in Ireland were Wesley's steadfast friends. When he saw them in the crowds in hostile neighbourhoods he knew that he was safe from the adversaries who glowered at him from a distance.[1]

It was during this visit to Limerick that Wesley went, on June 4, to Ballingarrane and preached to a large congregation, chiefly of Palatines. The next morning and evening he preached to Palatines at Newmarket. He says of them: 'These have quite a different look from the natives of the country, as well as a different temper. They are a serious thinking people, and their diligence turns all their land into a garden.' We look in vain for some reference to Philip Embury and Barbara Heck in this notice of the visit to Ballingarrane. We are indebted to Mr. Crookshank for his record of the fact that, before Wesley left Limerick, he stated to the Society that if they would procure a suitable site for building a preaching-house, and send him word, he would return and spend four days with them. They took up the matter at once. They secured a piece of ground, near the old court-house, which was in all respects suitable. True to his promise, he returned at the end of June, met the Society, and inquired what each one

[1] On Sunday, May 2, when he preached morning and evening in the market-house at Sligo, his note is: 'Abundance of the dragoons were there; so were many of the officers, who behaved with uncommon seriousness.'

was willing to contribute. In response a considerable sum was subscribed, and the much-needed 'house' was afterwards erected.[1]

On July 24 Wesley returned to Dublin, and a few days afterwards held a Conference there. In his *Journal* there is no record of its proceedings; but, by the aid of Mr. Crookshank, we get information concerning some of those who attended its sessions. He quotes certain notes from a diary kept by Mr. Garrett, a well-known member of the Dublin Society, which enables us to name some of the preachers who were present. Mr. Garrett says: 'July 28.—Have had a good time of it since Mr. Wesley and the preachers came among us. 29.—Last night was a watch-night, when we had nine or ten preachers, the greatest number that I remember to have seen at one time—Messrs. J. Wesley, Manners, Kead, Swindells, Deaves, Davis, Roberts, Guilford, Lee, and Harris.'[2] Mr. Crookshank considers that these names represent nearly, if not all, the preachers then in Ireland. Glancing over them, we have some difficulty in understanding the abandonment of open-air preaching in some parts of Ireland. Excluding Wesley from our calculation, we find nine names of lay preachers who are fairly well known to those who have made a study of early Methodism. We may deduct from the list James Deaves, who 'retired from the work' in 1768, and Mark Davis and William Harris, who left in 1769. But all the rest died in the work. When we look at their names we feel that we are in the presence of heroic men, who, in the cause of their Master, feared no foe. We wish that we could induce modern Methodists to read *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*.[3] Tennyson in one of his holiday homes spent hours in reading these books. We unhesitatingly advise our readers to follow his example. If we are asking too much, then we appeal to a lover of the Yorkshire dales to put the fourth volume of the series into his knapsack and make his way to Nidderdale. Standing on the bridge at Pateley in the summer sunshine, let him read the story of the assaults on Thomas Lee by the mob that was usually led by a paid captain and, in his absence, sometimes by the minister of the parish. After describing the beginning of the assault on himself, during which he had been

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism*, i. 160–161.
[2] Now issued as *Wesley's Veterans*.
[3] Ibid., i. 165.

thrown over the bridge into the river, Thomas Lee continues:

> My wife, with some friends, now came up. Seeing her busy about me, some asked, 'What! are you a Methodist?' gave her several blows, which made her bleed at the mouth, and swore they would put her into the river. All this time I lay upon the ground, the mob being undetermined what to do. Some cried out, 'Make an end of him!' Others were for sparing my life: but the dispute was cut short by their agreeing to put some others into the water. So they took them away, leaving me and my wife together. She endeavoured to raise me up; but, having no strength, I dropped down to the ground again. She got me up again, and supported me about an hundred yards; then I was set on horseback, and made a shift to ride softly, as far as Michael Granger's house. Here I was stripped from head to foot, and was washed. I left my wet clothes here, and rode to Greenhow Hill, where many were waiting for me; and, though much bruised and very weak, preached a short sermon, from Psalm xxxiv. 19: 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.'[1]

Thomas Lee may be taken as a type of most of the Methodist preachers of that day, and his courage is indisputable. He was present at the Dublin Conference of 1762. We expect that a conversation took place on the subject of open-air preaching, and we may be sure that his opinions would be in favour of Wesley's protest against the 'cooping up' of the preachers in the 'rooms' that were being multiplied in Ireland. We will dismiss the suspicion of waning courage, and will look in another direction for an explanation of the cause of the diminution of out-door preaching in Ireland.

In the fourth edition of Myles's *Chronological History of the People called Methodists* there is a list of 'chapels' in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. It gives us much-needed insight into a subject on which we still need more light. It enables us to trace the progress of Methodism, in respect of chapel-building, to the year 1812. Its compilation cost Myles much trouble. He does not pretend that the list is complete. Those who have paid special attention to the subject will sympathize with him in his failure to obtain all the information he desired. But the value of his patient work cannot be disputed. At this point we will attempt to ascertain the number of Methodist preaching-houses built or acquired in England and Ireland up to the year 1769. There were ninety in England and sixteen in Ireland. We must

[1] *Early Methodist Preachers*, iv. 158–159; *Arminian Magazine*, 1780, 30.

remember that an ever-increasing number of the chapels in England were registered under the provisions of the Act of Toleration. But that Act did not apply to Ireland; the protection of the Act of Toleration did not extend to chapels built in that country. We have also seen that protection was granted in England to preachers who, on certain conditions, took out licences which could be produced in the case of threatened assaults. In Ireland that resource was not available. We suggest that these facts should be considered before we condemn those preachers in Ireland who restricted their work of preaching to the 'houses' that were ever increasing in number.

In the Dublin Conference of 1762 we notice a man who claims our deep respect. His name is John Manners. Wesley describes him as 'a plain man of middling sense, and not eloquent, but rather rude in speech.' He had not been remarkably useful; but in 1762 he experienced a great change. He became an enthusiastic preacher of holiness. Under his ministry a wonderful revival began in Dublin. In Wesley's *Journal* we find several letters from him describing its progress. During Wesley's visit to Dublin he made full inquiries about this work. He says, 'I found he had not at all exceeded the truth in the accounts he had sent me from time to time' Summing up his description of 'the wonderful work,' he says: 'In some respects the work of God in this place was more remarkable than even in London. (1) It is far greater, in proportion to the time and to the number of people. That Society had above seven-and-twenty hundred members; this not a fifth part of the number. Six months after the flame broke out there we had about thirty witnesses of the great salvation. In Dublin there were above forty in less than four months. (2) The work was more pure. In all this time, while they were mildly and tenderly treated there were none of them headstrong or unadvisable; none that were wiser than their teachers; none who dreamed of being immortal or infallible, or incapable of temptation; in short, no whimsical or enthusiastic persons. All were calm and sober-minded.' The work of John Manners was soon done. Atmore says: 'The fatigues and hardships he endured in the faithful discharge of his important office were too much for his weak constitution; and therefore occasioned his premature death

in the prime of life.' He left the world in the triumph of faith, in the city of York, in the year 1764.

On Saturday, July 31, Wesley embarked on board the *Dorset* for Parkgate. He would have liked to linger longer in Ireland. He says that he had never before felt such a union of heart with the people of Dublin. Landing, he found several of the northern Societies aflame with the new spirit that was working wonderfully in England. On Tuesday, August 10, in Leeds, he began his nineteenth Conference. Once more we are disappointed. In a note the editor of his *Journal* says that Lady Huntingdon, Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, William Romaine, Martin Madan, and Henry Venn were present. Our curiosity is piqued as to the topic of the 'conversations'; but we have to submit to the fact that there is only a slight record of the proceedings.

On August 19 Wesley arrived in London. As he expected, 'the sower of tares' had not been idle during his five months' absence. He held a meeting at West Street, and gives an optimistic report of its effect. The subject of the conversation at the meeting may be judged from the significant entry in his *Journal* on Saturday, August 21. He says: 'My brother and I had a long conversation with Mr. Maxfield, and freely told him whatever we disliked. In some things we found he had been blamed without cause; others he promised to alter; so we were thoroughly satisfied with the conversation, believing all misunderstandings were now removed.' The subjects of discussion we may surmise when we recall the contrast which Wesley draws between the London and Dublin Societies which we have just quoted.

John Wesley had to be content with this truce in a serious contest, for he had to hasten to the West of England. He reached Exeter on Saturday, August 28, and preached there. When he began the service he must have been disappointed. Beside his travelling-companions the congregation consisted of two women and one man. Before he had closed the service the room was about half full. His comment on the attendance is: 'This comes of omitting field-preaching.' The next day he preached in the morning on Southernhay Green 'to an extremely quiet congregation.' Then he went to the Cathedral, heard a useful sermon, and enjoyed a service which was performed 'with great seriousness and decency.' He was

delighted with the organ, and declares that he had never seen or heard before an organ ' so large, beautiful, and so finely toned.' Then a memorable sacramental service was held. It seems to have been the custom at Exeter for the communicants to seat themselves in alternate rows of chairs, and for the bread and wine to be carried to them by the officiating clergy. Among those so seated, on Sunday, August 29, 1762, we see an old man who was soon to pass within the veil. He died on September 13, 1762, in his seventy-ninth year, about a fortnight after this service ; near him is John Wesley, who makes this comment in his *Journal.* ' I was well pleased to partake of the Lord's Supper with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington. Oh, may we sit down together in the Kingdom of our Father ! ' It was the custom at Exeter Cathedral for the boys of the choir to remain on one Sunday of each month to the end of the Communion Service and sing the *Gloria in Excelsis.* They sang it that day. Wesley listened entranced to the young voices and the pealing of the organ. He says : ' The music of " Glory be to God in the highest," I think, exceeded the *Messiah* itself.' When this scene shines out of the past we are reminded of the fact that on November 16, 1769, John Wesley wrote a letter to Professor Liden, of Sweden. Referring to his controversy with Lavington, he says that the bishop was thoroughly convicted of his mistake before he died. We will try to forget the sharp contentions of cloudy and dark days.[1]

John Wesley's visitation of the western Societies continued until nearly the end of October. In Cornwall he found much to enhearten him ; but, in one respect, he was disappointed. He says : ' The more I converse with the believers in Cornwall, the more I am convinced that they have sustained great loss for want of hearing the doctrine of Christian Perfection clearly and strongly enforced. I see, wherever this is not done, the believers grow dead and cold. Nor can this be prevented but by keeping up in them an hourly expectation of being perfected in love. I say an hourly expectation ; for to expect it at death, or some time hence, is much the same as not expecting it at all '[2] When he got back to London, on October 30, he found that the good results of the preaching of the doctrine of Christian Perfection depended on the preacher's understanding

[1] See *Journal*, iv. 526, 527 and *notes*. [2] *Journal*, iv. 529.

of that doctrine. He stayed in London for a day, and heard enough to convince him that the peace of the Society there was being dangerously disturbed by men who 'strongly enforced' views of the doctrine with which he had no sympathy. He felt himself compelled to take action. In the opinion of many that action had been delayed too long. Some excuse may be found for him when we consider his absence from London during many months of this critical year; but it must be remembered that in not a few cases he was loath to take quick and decisive action. It will help us to come to a decision on the vexed question of Wesley's delays if we remember that, writing to his brother on January 5, 1762, he says: 'If Thomas Maxfield continues as he is, it is impossible he should long continue with us. But I live in hope of better things. Meantime, *festina lente*. . . . This week I have begun to speak my mind concerning five or six honest enthusiasts. But I move only a hair's breadth at a time; and by this means we come nearer and nearer to each other. No sharpness will profit. There is need of a lady's hand, as well as a lion's heart.'[1] At the beginning of November, 1762, he saw that the policy he had pursued must be changed, and he wrote a letter to Maxfield pointing out the matters in his conduct of which he disapproved.

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 115.

# IX

## THOMAS MAXFIELD

When John Wesley was closing his records of the year 1762 he seems to have paused for a few moments. Then he added these words: 'I now stood and looked back on the past year; a year of uncommon trials and uncommon blessings. Abundance have been convinced of sin; very many have found peace with God; and in London only, I believe, full two hundred have been brought into glorious liberty. And yet I have had more care and trouble in six months than in several years preceding. What the end will be, I know not; but it is enough that God knoweth.'[1] We have light on the path hidden from Wesley's eyes. We must now try to describe events which occurred in London during the earlier months of 1763. We have already made suggestions which will assist us to understand those events; but it is necessary to place them in a clearer light.

Thomas Maxfield occupies a distinguished position among the early Methodist preachers. For twenty years before the period we have reached he had done fearless evangelizing work, often in the face of furious opposition. He was a Bristol man, and was led into the light of salvation under the preaching of John Wesley in that city. In 1740 he was in London, and became the first of Wesley's regular lay preachers. John Wesley had great confidence in him; he admired and loved him. He introduced him to a lady who had considerable wealth, and the acquaintance ended in marriage. At Wesley's suggestion he had been ordained by Bishop Barnard, who was wishful to relieve Wesley of some of the pressure of the work that was undermining his health. Charles Wesley had settled in Bristol, and was practically laid aside from active work for two years by serious sickness. As John Wesley was compelled to be absent from London for long periods, it seemed fortunate that Maxfield was able to stay in London and

[1] *Journal*, iv. 542.

to take care of the Societies, which were quickly increasing. We can judge the degree of confidence that Wesley placed in him when we note that in 1760 he had appointed him to meet every Friday a sort of select band consisting of four laymen. Judging by subsequent events, we suppose that the members of this band were to act as his counsellors. They were men who all professed to be ' entirely sanctified.' The arrangement which made them, in a sense, Maxfield's assistants seemed to solve a difficult problem.

It is easy to judge after the event ; but we think that persons possessing some knowledge of human nature, while they may admire Wesley's confidence in Maxfield, will doubt his wisdom in making the arrangements just described. It left out of sight the lay preachers appointed to London ; it failed to give due allowance to the opinions of the Societies ; it did not foresee the dangers that accompanied the progress of the great spiritual movement that was deeply affecting Methodism at the time. Tyerman, in his *Life of John Wesley*, has given us the results of his close study of the events that led up to the troubles of 1763. If we compare his statements with those of Henry Moore, the biographer and intimate friend of John Wesley, we shall be able to form a judgement on important incidents which we must now consider.[1]

Briefly as possible we will state some of the more important facts of the case. It was not long before John Wesley found that his confidence in Thomas Maxfield was not justified. On December 23, 1762, he wrote an important letter to his brother. After referring to some people who imagined themselves saved from sin ' upon the word of others,' he continues : ' Some of these, and two or three others, are still wild. But the matter does not stick here. I could play with all these if Thomas Maxfield were right. He is *mali caput et fons* ; so inimitably wrong-headed, and so absolutely inconvincible ; and yet (what is exceeding strange) God continues to bless his work.' This letter is valuable ; but it must be supplemented. It is well known that Tyerman was a frank critic of John Wesley ; he never failed to point out his defects. The value of the following statement by him is increased by that fact.

[1] See Moore's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 218–225 ; Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 432–441.

As early as 1760, Wesley had appointed Maxfield to meet, every Friday, a sort of select band in London, consisting of Messrs. Biggs, Latlets, Calvert and Dixon, all of whom professed to be entirely sanctified. Some of these favoured ones soon had dreams, visions, and impressions, as they thought, from God; and Maxfield, instead of repressing their whimsies, encouraged them. Presently their visions created contempt for those who had them not; and were regarded as proofs of the highest grace. Some of the preachers opposed these holy visionaries with a considerable amount of roughness. This excited their resentment. They refused to hear their rebukers preach, and followed after Maxfield. Their numbers multiplied; and Maxfield told them they were not to be taught by man, especially by those who had less grace than themselves. The result was, when Wesley returned to London in October, 1762, he found the Society in an uproar, and Maxfield's friends formed into a sort of detached connexion. . . . Enthusiasm, pride, and intense uncharitableness were now the chief characteristics of these high professors. Wesley tenderly reproved them. One of them resented, and cried out, 'We will not be brow-beaten any longer; we will throw off the mask'; and accordingly returned her own and her husband's tickets, saying, 'Sir, we will have no more to do with you; Mr. Maxfield is our teacher.'[1]

In 1763 it became clear that matters were hastening to a crisis. Wesley made an attempt to prevent the threatened separation by desiring all the preachers, as they had time, to be present at all meetings when he could not attend himself, particularly at the Friday meeting we have mentioned which met in the chapel at West Street. When Maxfield heard of this arrangement he was highly offended, and wrote to Wesley protesting against it. In his letter he says: 'I wrote to you to ask if those who before met at Brother Guilford's might not meet in the chapel. Soon after you came to town the preachers were brought into the meeting, though you told me, again and again, they should not come.[2] Had I known this, I would rather have paid for a room out of my own pocket. I am not speaking of the people that met at the Foundery before, though I let some of them come to that meeting. If you intend to have the preachers there to watch, and others that *I think very unfit*, and will not give me liberty to give leave to some that *I think fit* to be there, I shall not think it my duty to meet them.' Moore, after giving a copy of Maxfield's letter, says: 'So from this time he kept a separate meeting elsewhere.'

[1] Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 432–433.

[2] Wesley, in copying this letter, inserts these words: 'True, but since I said this, there has been an entire change in the situation of things.'

Shortly afterwards Maxfield refused to preach at the Foundery according to appointment. Wesley, who was at Westminster, where he intended to preach, hearing of this refusal, immediately returned to the Foundery. He preached there from the text: 'If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved!' Moore's comment on the occurrence is: 'Thus was that breach made which could never afterwards be healed.'[1]

We must leave Maxfield for a time that we may give attention to a man who was conspicuous in the events which led to the serious 'separation' which occurred in London at this time. His name was George Bell. He was a native of Barningham, near Barnard Castle. He had been a corporal in the Life Guards and had become a member of the Methodist Society in London. Moore's testimony concerning him is that at one time he was unquestionably 'a man of piety, of deep communion with God, and of extraordinary zeal for the conversion of souls.' He seems to have been more conspicuous for the liveliness of his imagination than for the strength of his judgement. Moore, who treats him carefully, says that while he hearkened to the advice of those who had longer experience in the ways of God than himself, as well as more knowledge of the devices of Satan, he was a pattern to all, and eminently useful to his brethren. But he soon rejected their guidance, and, 'ceasing to regard either them or his Bible, he fell into enthusiasm, pride, and great uncharitableness.' It is clear that at one time he possessed no little attractiveness. Wesley had an affection for him; he allowed him to preach in London, and did his utmost to persuade him to avoid the indiscretions which led to his downfall.

In March, 1761, Bell wrote a letter to John Wesley containing the news of a great change in his religious experience. He believed that he had been sanctified. Tyerman describes the letter as being 'tinged with frenzy.' The description is probably correct, for soon after it was written Bell showed signs of unsoundness of mind. He began to hold meetings of his own in which he declared that God had *done* with all preachings and sacraments, and was to be found nowhere but in the assemblies of himself and his London friends. He also asserted that 'none could teach those who are renewed

[1] Moore's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 224–225.

in love, unless they were in the state themselves.' As he continued his teachings he gathered many people around him. He infected them with his own enthusiasm, and a group of persons was formed distinguished by his delusions. They fancied themselves more holy than Adam and Eve before they yielded to temptation. As for themselves, they were incapable of falling. They also professed to have the gift of healing. They made experiments on blind people, and even attempted to raise the dead. Some of them, misunderstanding a text in the Revelation of St. John, reached the conclusion that they were exempt from death.[1] It seems almost incredible that Wesley bore with Bell's extravagances so long. It was not until December 26, 1762, that he desired him to take no further part in the services at West Street or at the Foundery. His patience at last was worn out, as is clear by an entry in his *Journal*. He says: 'The reproach of Christ I am willing to bear; but not the reproach of enthusiasm, if I can help it.'[2]

On January 7, 1763, John Wesley had an interview with George Bell and two or three of his friends. He had invited one or two other men, capable of giving sound advice, to be present. At this interview he and his supporters did their best to convince Bell of his mistakes. We judge that part of the conversation concerned an opinion Bell had recently adopted—that the end of the world was to be on February 28. But no impression could be made on him. He was unmoved as a rock. After this interview several persons withdrew from the Methodist Society; and on February 4 George Bell followed their example. This opened Wesley's way. He wrote to the *London Chronicle* on January 7, explaining briefly the views of 'Mr. Bell and a few others,' and disowning responsibility for their proceedings. A month later, when Bell's prophecy had been noised abroad, Wesley wrote again to the paper, announcing that Bell was no longer a member of the Methodist Society. He also declared that 'neither he nor his people believed that the end of the world, or any other signal calamity, was due on February 28.'

Bell's prediction concerning the end of the world produced considerable excitement in London. It did not rouse the

[1] See Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 432–434; *Arminian Magazine*, 1780, 674; 1790, 42.

[2] Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 436.

terror that was created by the earthquakes of 1750, but it raised a panic which attracted the attention of those who were responsible for the peace of the city. They watched Bell's movements. We shall see the result of their vigilance. Those who are acquainted with the old maps of London will have noticed that in the neighbourhood of the Foundery several artificial mounds had been raised. In Benham and Welch's interesting book on *Mediaeval London* we find the history of some of them. When the Protector Somerset's palace in the Strand was being erected he found that he required more building materials than were to be readily obtained. Near St. Paul's Cathedral there stood an old building, known as the Charnel Chapel, in the crypt of which many people had been buried. Somerset caused the chapel to be pulled down. The bones in the crypt were removed in a thousand cart-loads to Finsbury Fields. In Benham and Welch's book it is said: 'The soil required to cover them raised the ground sufficiently for three windmills to stand on. The windmills are seen in Aggas's map of London, and Windmill Street, Finsbury, now marks the site, as the name "Bunhill Fields" perpetuates the ghastly Bone Hill.'[1] On one of the mounds in the neighbourhood, on February 27, George Bell, and other believers in the coming of the end of the world, took their stand that they might gaze once more on the doomed city of London. Lost in contemplation, they were suddenly disturbed. Two constables, armed with a warrant, arrested Bell. They marched him first of all to Long Acre and brought him before a magistrate. The magistrate looked at the warrant and saw that Bell was charged with uttering his predictions in 'an unlicensed meeting-house.' That was not a correct description of West Street Chapel, and he declined to interfere. But he sent the constables to Southwark, where Snowsfields Chapel stood. Bell was taken to the Borough, and a magistrate committed him to 'the new prison,' where he had to endure the chagrin of the failure of his prophecy.[2] The news of his arrest soon became known. It came to the knowledge of George Whitefield, who, in a letter, says: 'I am sorry to find that Mr. Bell is taken up. To take no notice would be the best method. A prison, or outward punishment, is but a poor cure for enthusiasm, or a disordered understanding

[1] *Mediaeval London*, 169. [2] *London Magazine*, 1763, 162.

It may increase, but not extinguish, such an *ignis fatuus*.' The failure of his prophecy, together with other experiences, had a bad effect on Bell. He lived to an old age, but he lost his religion ; and, according to Southey, became ' an ignorant infidel.'

At the Conference of 1762 a charge was brought against Thomas Maxfield. Its character is not stated, but may be imagined. The fact that John Wesley strongly defended him is of importance and must be remembered. At last Wesley's patience showed signs of weakening. In his *Journal* there is a letter to a friend which he wrote some time after the final breach had taken place. It is possible to get a gleam of light from it on this melancholy business. First of all, it is necessary to say that Wesley's opinion that Maxfield believed in Bell's prophecy was not well founded. Maxfield, in his *Vindication*, published in 1767, distinctly says that when Bell announced the forthcoming destruction of London in a meeting at Wapping, he rose, when the prophet had done speaking, and 'set aside all that he had said about it.'[1] That fact must be borne in mind. But in Wesley's letter facts come to light which cannot be ignored. Let us consider an occurrence which had a determining effect on the association of the men who had been friends so long. We will state it in Wesley's words. Dealing with Bell's prophecy, he says :

> About this time one of our stewards, who, at my desire, took the chapel in Snowsfields for my use, sent me word the chapel was his, and Mr. Bell should exhort there, whether I would or no. Upon this I desired the next preacher there to inform the congregation that, while things stood thus, neither I nor our preachers could in conscience preach there any more.
>
> Nevertheless, Mr. Maxfield did preach there. On this I sent him a note, desiring him not to do it ; and adding, ' If you do, you thereby renounce connexion with me.'
>
> Receiving this, he said, ' *I will* preach at Snowsfields.' He did so, and thereby renounced connexion. On this point, and no other, we divided ; by this act the knot was cut. Resolving to do this, he told Mr. Clementson, ' I am to preach at the Foundery no more.'

The position taken up by the trustee who claimed the Snowsfields Chapel as his own property excites our interest. He was not the only trustee who has supposed that he is the

[1] See Wesley's *Journal*, v. 12, *note*.

personal possessor of the building that has been assigned to him for purposes specified in the deed of trust. Instead of illuminating this mistaken man, John Wesley took a notable step. He determined to vacate the old chapel, which he had occupied since 1743, and build another in the neighbourhood. In carrying out his intention he received great help from Samuel Butcher, a leather-seller in Crucifix Lane. The building was in Wesley's favourite form of the octagon. It was opened on August 18, 1763; and on Thursday, December 27 of that year this entry appears in the *Journal*: 'I preached and administered the sacrament at the new chapel in Snowsfields. How well does God order all things! By losing the former chapel we have gained both a better house and a larger congregation.'[1]

Wilson, in his *History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches*, says that the congregation remaining in the old chapel engaged Thomas Maxfield to be their stated preacher. After preaching there for about two or three years he became the minister of a Dissenting chapel in Ropemaker Alley, Moorfields, and closed his labours as the minister of the Dissenting chapel in Princes Street, Moorfields.[2] His secession from the Methodists cost the Society nearly two hundred members. In recording that fact, Henry Moore, in his *Life of John Wesley*, says that several persons who separated with Maxfield continued with him to the last, though the greater part returned.[3] We will relieve the sombreness of the story by recording the fact that towards the close of Maxfield's life the old friendship with Wesley was restored. Wesley preached in his chapel; and, when the end of Maxfield's life drew near, Wesley visited him in his last sickness. The two men talked together; as they conversed, the clouds that had darkened their path passed away.

[1] The octagon chapel was the predecessor of the Long Lane Chapel in Southwark. See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 152, *note*.
[2] *History of Dissenting Churches*, iv. 283.
[3] *Life of Wesley*, ii. 225.

## X

## A LONELY VIGIL

We have dealt with the Maxfield and Bell disturbances in a separate chapter in order that the way might be cleared for the consideration of other events which made 1763 a year of great importance in the history of Methodism. The loss of Maxfield was severely felt by John Wesley. He had received episcopal ordination, and was able to assist in the administration of the sacrament to the crowds of members who assembled in the West Street and Spitalfields Chapels. When he 'departed from the work' a serious difficulty arose. The number of clergymen who were willing to help Wesley on these occasions was diminished almost to the vanishing-point. Charles Wesley was laid aside by serious illness; for two years his visits to London were rare. John Fletcher was busy in his own parish of Madeley. William Grimshaw died on April 7, 1763. On March 20, writing to Lady Huntingdon, Wesley says: 'By the mercy of God, I am still alive, and following the work to which He has called me, although without any help, even in the most trying times, from those of whom I might have expected it.' He mentions the names of several clergymen who had been his friends and had turned against him. The Maxfield and Bell extravagances made 1763 'the year of the great forsaking.' It was in vain that he asserted that he was no more accountable for Bell's prophecies and teachings than Whitefield. He declared to Lady Huntingdon that he had never countenanced them in any degree, but opposed them from the moment he heard them. He adds: 'Neither have those extravagances any foundation in any doctrine which I teach. The loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and loving all men as Christ loved us, is, and ever was, for these thirty years, the sum of what I deliver, as pure religion and undefiled. However, if I am

bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. The will of the Lord be done!'[1]

John Wesley's difficulty in the matter of the administration of the sacrament to the London Societies was greatly increased by the fact that the Societies in other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland were increasing in number and demanded his constant care. It was while his mind was in a state of perplexity that an event occurred which seemed to suggest a plan by which the London difficulty might be solved. Myles says that in the beginning of the year 1763 a bishop of the Greek Church named Erasmus visited London. Among Wesley's lay preachers there was a man who had been a doctor. His name was John Jones. He is described as 'a man of good learning and great abilities.' Laying aside his medical work, he acted as a lay preacher, and also as a tutor at Kingswood School. In most respects he was suited to fill Maxfield's place in London, but he was not ordained. We sometimes wonder why Wesley did not apply to Dr. Barnard, the Bishop of Londonderry, in this time of great difficulty. Instead of seeking ordination from him, he thought of the Greek bishop. He made inquiries concerning him. A letter was sent to the Patriarch of Smyrna, who replied that Erasmus was the Bishop of Arcadia, in Crete. When Erasmus was in London, several gentlemen who had seen him in Turkey recognized him at once as the bishop they had met on the Continent. The result of Wesley's inquiries was that a request was made to Erasmus to ordain John Jones, and he consented. The news of the ordination reached the ears of Charles Wesley. He was indignant. When he came to London he would not allow John Jones to assist him in administering the sacrament. The result of his opposition was that John Jones, after a time, left the Methodists, was ordained by the Bishop of London, and became the Vicar of Harwich, which office he held for many years.

The application to Erasmus in the case of John Jones had an unfortunate result. Unknown to Wesley a few of his lay preachers persuaded the Greek bishop to ordain them. When Wesley heard of these ordinations he was indignant, and threatened to sever those who had been ordained from association with himself. The incident became known, and led to a

[1] Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 463.

contest with Augustus Montague Toplady and others, in which tempers were lost, and the worst side of eighteenth-century religious controversy was displayed.

Watching Wesley in his attempt to meet the difficulties which threatened the London Society with the loss of the administration of the sacrament in their own chapels, we note a solution of the difficult problem which does not seem to have been recognized by him at the time. In March, 1762, the curate of Ewhurst, near Rye, in Sussex, was present in a congregation of Methodists. Thomas Rankin was the preacher. The curate listened intently to the sermon. It was on a subject that searched his heart. Light came to him from that source of healing light, the Cross of Christ. A Saviour from sin was revealed. Rejoicing in the assurance of his own salvation, he repeated the substance of Rankin's sermon in the parish church. The congregation listened with wonder to the good news. After the service some of the people came to him and expressed their earnest desire to hear more of the truths he had proclaimed. To one of them he said : ' I received them from the Methodist preachers ; go and hear for yourself.' The curate became a member of the Methodist Society, meeting regularly in class. The church was crowded when he preached ; but some were offended at his teaching and complained to the rector. The rector listened to them, and in October, 1762, the curate was dismissed. He said farewell, and in November he had an interview with John Wesley and asked to be allowed ' to serve him as a son in the gospel.' He was accepted ; and that service was rendered faithfully to the close of Wesley's life. His work was done among the London Societies. He won the love of the people. He died in London on February 11, 1792, nearly a year after he had read the burial service at the side of Wesley's grave. Those who know something of the work and influence of John Richardson, that ' lover and maker of peace,' will pause for a few moments to think of him as they read the inscription on Wesley's tomb.[1]

John Wesley did not commence his Northern journey until May 16, 1763. The Maxfield secession made it impossible for him to leave London, save for brief visits, before that time. But his strength was not wholly spent in calming the disturbance. It is difficult to say when the disturbance began

[1] Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 365–366.

to subside. We note that on May 2 he enters in his *Journal* this reference to the condition of the state of affairs at that time : ' Monday, and the following days, I was fully employed in visiting the Society, and settling the minds of those who had been confused and distressed by a thousand misrepresentations. Indeed, a flood of calumny and evil-speaking (as was easily foreseen) was poured out on every side. My point was still to go straight forward in the work whereto I am called.' We would willingly draw ' the veil of oblivion ' over the incidents of that distracted time ; but, although the ' veil ' often does good service, sometimes its too swift use hides events that should be long remembered.

In January a memorable frost gripped London. The Thames was frozen over. In some places the ice was six feet thick ; carriages were driven over it, booths were erected and fairs were held on its surface. But the misery caused by this winter in London was widespread and severe. Many persons were frozen to death, and multitudes crowded the streets begging for bread and clothes. We know something concerning John Wesley's sympathy with the poor. He was the friend of those who were ready to perish. From a letter which appeared in *Lloyd's Evening Post* on January 26 we see that he made an effort to relieve the prevailing distress. At his own expense he opened a soup-kitchen at the Foundery, and fed many who suffered from hunger. In addition, he made a collection at the same place for further supplying the necessities of the destitute, which realized upwards of one hundred pounds.[1]

On January 30 we note that John Wesley preached a sermon in West Street Chapel before the Society for the Reformation of Manners. The old Societies bearing the name, formed in the reign of King William and Queen Mary, had disappeared.[2] John Wesley, in his sermon, gave an account of the origin of the new Society, in the interests of which he made a powerful appeal. He said :

(1) It was on a Lord's day, in August, 1757, that, in a small company who were met for prayer and religious conversation, mention was made of the gross and open profanation of that sacred day by persons buying and selling, keeping open shop, tippling in ale-houses, and standing or

[1] Stevenson's *City Road Chapel*, 50.

[2] For an article on ' The Early Societies for the Reformation of Manners,' see *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xiii. 169–178.

sitting in the streets, roads, or fields, vending their wares as on common days; especially in Moorfields, which was then full of them every Sunday, from one end to the other. It was considered what method could be taken to redress these grievances; and it was agreed that six of them should, in the morning, wait upon Sir John Fielding for instruction. They did so. He approved of the design, and directed them how to carry it into execution.

(2) They first delivered petitions to the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen; to the justices sitting at Hick's Hall; and those in Westminster; and they received from all these honourable benches much encouragement to proceed.

(3) It was next judged proper to signify their desire to many persons of eminent rank, and to the body of the clergy, as well as the ministers of other denominations, belonging to the several churches and meetings in and about the cities of London and Westminster; and they had the satisfaction to meet with a hearty consent and universal approbation from them.

(4) They then printed and dispersed, at their own expense, several thousand books of instruction to constables and other parish officers, explaining and enforcing their several duties; and, to prevent, as far as possible, the necessity of proceeding to an actual execution of the laws, they likewise printed and dispersed, in all parts of the town, dissuasives from Sabbath-breaking, extracts from Acts of Parliament against it, and notices to the offenders.

(5) The way being paved by these precautions, it was in the beginning of the year 1758 that, after notices delivered again and again, which were as often set at nought, actual information was made to the magistrates against persons profaning the Lord's day.

At a later stage John Wesley says that Mr. W. Welsh was 'the father' of the new Society for the Reformation of Manners. He must have had some level-headed counsellors to guide him. It will be seen that it was only after high authorities had been consulted, and transgressors of the law of the land had been fully warned, that the new Society commenced its much-needed work. It was successful. When John Wesley preached his sermon he was able to report that from August, 1757, to January 30, 1763, the number of persons brought to justice for unlawful gaming, profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, harlotry, and keeping 'ill houses,' and for offering to sale obscene prints, amounted to 10,588. We readily admit that such work should not have been left to the members of a society; but those who know the condition of magistrates' and other law courts in the eighteenth century will understand why it was felt to be necessary for a private society to attempt to arrest the spread of immorality in this country.

John Wesley strongly sympathized with the movement. He remembered that his father had preached before the members of the old society on the text, 'Who will rise up with me against the wicked?' In 1763 he chose the same text for his own sermon. He also was aware that his people were in hearty accord with him in his attempt to suppress vice of all descriptions. At one stage of his sermon he gave interesting information concerning the membership of the new society. He says:

> In the admission of members into the society, no regard is had to any particular sect or party. Whoever is found, upon inquiry, to be a good man, is readily admitted. And none who has selfish or pecuniary views will long continue therein; not only because he can gain nothing thereby, but because he would quickly be a loser, inasmuch as he must commence subscribing as soon as he is a member. Indeed, the vulgar cry is, 'These are all Whitefieldites.' But it is a great mistake. About twenty of the constantly subscribing members are all that are in connexion with Mr. Whitefield; about fifty are in connexion with Mr. Wesley; about twenty, who are of the Established Church, have no connexion with either; and about seventy are Dissenters; who make in all an hundred and sixty. There are, indeed, many more who assist in the work by occasional subscriptions.[1]

From Wesley's sermon it is clear that the management of this Society for the Reformation of Manners was in the hands of men who represented the different sections of the Protestant Churches in England. It anticipated the coming of the day when evangelical alliances would be formed for the purification of the life of the English people. In a note appended to his sermon Wesley records the fate of the society. He says: 'After this society had subsisted several years, and done unspeakable good, it was wholly destroyed by a verdict given against it in the King's Bench, with £300 damages. I doubt a severe account remains for the witnesses, the jury, and all who were concerned in that dreadful affair.' From Wesley's *Journal* we judge that the trial which brought destruction to the society took place in 1766. On Sunday, February 2 of that year, he dined with Mr. Welsh. In his entry for the day he refers to 'the late Society for Reformation of Manners,' and says the excellent design was at a full stop. Reading between the lines, we get

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vi. 154.

some light on the catastrophe. It seems that the verdict against the society was obtained on the evidence of a man who swore falsely at the trial in Westminster Hall. When that trial was over an action was commenced against this man, and he was convicted of perjury. But the costs of the two trials were so heavy that the pecuniary resources of the society broke down under the strain, and the society was dissolved. We do not wonder that Wesley's entry in the *Journal* on February 2, 1766, ends with the words: 'Lord, how long shall the ungodly triumph?'

On March 7, 1763, notwithstanding the disturbances in the London Society, John Wesley went to Norwich. He must have been astonished to find that the city, which had so often been a place of turmoil, brought the rest to him which he so much needed. He spent several 'quiet, comfortable days in Norwich, Yarmouth, and Colchester, without any jar or contention.' Refreshed by his visit, he returned to London on March 19. He needed this interval of rest, for news that would bring him sadness, and an increase of his responsibilities, would soon reach him.

On March 5, 1763, William Grimshaw wrote a letter to Charles Wesley. After commenting on the Maxfield and Bell disturbances in London, towards the close of his letter he gives an account of Methodist progress in the neighbourhood of Haworth. Benjamin Ingham's Societies, which had been formed in Yorkshire and elsewhere, were breaking up, and Grimshaw was busy gathering the scattered members into the Methodist Societies. He had admitted above a hundred of them, and hoped to be still more successful.[1] The closing sentences of his letter show that he was eagerly doing his work as a Methodist preacher in close association with the Wesleys. Then, on April 7, somewhat suddenly, he died. When the news reached John Wesley he was in the midst of disputes and desertions. His health, which had caused so much anxiety to his friends, was fortunately improving. It had regained much of its old tone; but the loss of Grimshaw severely tested it.

In estimating the value of William Grimshaw's work, we are impressed by the fact that for many years he was accustomed to visit many of the Methodist Societies in the North of England.

[1] See Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 213.

Confining our attention to those in the wide area of the ' Great Haworth Round,' we turn to Mr. John William Laycock's valuable book, which has often given us guidance when dealing with Grimshaw's work. It contains an Appendix showing the approximate dates of the introduction of Methodism into places in the neighbourhood. The Appendix is compiled with scrupulous care. As we examine it we find that, from 1744 to 1763, Methodism had been introduced into one hundred and thirty places in the ' Round.'[1] Over the Societies in this wide extent of country Grimshaw had exercised constant care, and thereby relieved John Wesley of much hard work and responsibility. With his death that burden was transferred to Wesley's shoulders. It came upon him at a time when he was almost crushed by the load he had to carry.[2]

John Wesley had to postpone his usual visit to the North of England until May 16, for the London Society was in a restless condition and his presence there was necessary. Then he set out, hoping that the excitement about Maxfield was subsiding. He reached Newcastle on May 18. Three days after, he was in Edinburgh. There he found George Whitefield, who had intended to sail for America about the middle of April, but was detained in Scotland by sickness until June 4. On Sunday, May 22, Wesley saw him, and was much struck with his appearance. He thought that, ' humanly speaking,' he was ' worn out.' Then, remembering his own experiences, he comforted himself with the thought that ' we have to do with Him who hath all power in heaven and earth.' The time for the ' passing ' of Whitefield had not come. Seven more years of glorious toil awaited him, and Wesley's fears were banished.

We are not surprised that Wesley soon made his way to Aberdeen. The memories of his former visit were bright. Since he was there a ' preaching-house ' had been secured for Methodist services ; but when he arrived in Aberdeen he found that the desire to hear him was so keen that he had to address audiences in other places. His record changes the note which he had so often to sound. He says : ' Surely never was there a more open door. The four ministers of Aberdeen, the

[1] See Laycock's *Methodist Heroes in the Great Haworth Round*, 381–385.

[2] For John Wesley's estimate of William Grimshaw and his work, see his *Journal*, iv. 493–498.

minister of the adjoining town, and the three ministers of Old Aberdeen, hitherto seem to have no dislike, but rather to wish us "good luck in the name of the Lord." Most of the townspeople as yet seem to wish us well; so that there is no open opposition of any kind. Oh, what spirit ought a preacher to be of, that he may be able to bear all this sunshine!' On Wednesday, May 25, the evening being fair and mild, he preached to a multitude of people in the College Close; the next evening, the weather being raw and cold, he preached in the College Hall. Again we hear his delighted comment: 'What an amazing willingness to hear runs through this whole kingdom! They want only a few zealous, active labourers, who desire nothing but God; and they might soon carry the gospel through all this country, even as high as the Orkneys.'

On Sunday, May 29, John Wesley was in Edinburgh. At seven o'clock in the morning he preached in the High School yard. The General Assembly was being held in the city, and many ministers, noblemen, and gentlemen were present at the service. At five o'clock in the afternoon he preached to a still larger congregation in which 'abundantly more' of the members of the Assembly were present. He says: 'I spoke as plain as ever I did in my life; but I never knew any in Scotland offended at plain dealing. In this respect the North Britons are a pattern to all mankind.' We are especially interested in the morning service. Among those who listened to Wesley was a lady who bore an honoured name. Lady Frances Gardiner was the widow of Colonel James Gardiner, the hero of the fight at Preston Pans, who was described by Sir Walter Scott as 'that good Christian and gallant man.'[1] On July 25, 1763, Lady Frances Gardiner wrote a letter to John Wesley which has been preserved by Henry Moore. It sheds light on the progress of Methodism in Edinburgh at the time we have reached, and also on the character and Christian experience of the writer.

EDINBURGH, *July* 25, 1763.

REV. AND VERY DEAR SIR,—I persuade myself that you will not be displeased at my taking the liberty to write to you. You have cause to bless God for His having directed you in sending preachers to this place. As to those of them I have heard, I have cause to thank God

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 246–247.

that they came hither. There has been a comfortable reviving of late; some sinners are newly awakened; some formalists have got their eyes opened; some backsliders are recovered; and, I believe, many saints have been much edified. Mr. Roberts's preaching has been remarkably blessed to many in Edinburgh; and so was Mr. Hanby's, the short time he stayed. O that their sermons may be blessed wherever they preach! I verily believe God sent them.

I have never, I own, been at the preaching-house in a morning yet, as they preach so early. But I ventured to the High School yard the morning you left Edinburgh; and it pleased God, even after I had got home, to follow part of your sermon with a blessing to me; and I think it my duty to mention that God has often of late dealt very bountifully with me. Well may I be astonished at it when I consider my own unworthiness. But I dare venture to say that Christ, and all with Christ, is mine. I beg a share in your prayers; and am, very dear sir,

Your Sister in Christ Jesus,
FRANCES GARDINER.[1]

The charm of this letter is great. It takes away any inclination to comment on it. We will only say that in Scotland the Methodist doctrines won the hearts of other noble women whose names are still cherished by those who are best acquainted with the annals of our Church.

John Wesley did not get back to London until June 24. He found it inexpedient to leave the Societies there for some time because 'the ferment' produced by Maxfield's separation still continued. It was not until the middle of August that he ventured to recommence his work of visiting the Societies in other parts of the country. While in London he held a Conference, which began on Tuesday, July 19, and ended on Saturday, July 23. Structural alterations had to be carried out at the Foundery, and the Conference was held in the Spitalfields Chapel. We get little light on its business from Wesley's *Journal*. He says: 'It was a great blessing that we had peace among ourselves, while so many were making themselves ready for battle.' But this does not satisfy us; we are convinced that the proceedings of the 1763 Conference were of exceptional importance.

In our descriptions of John Wesley's work we have tried to show the gradual advance of the Methodist Societies to the position of a well-organized Church. From various sources we have been able to derive knowledge of the proceedings of

[1] Henry Moore's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 249.

Conferences, and have recorded the resolutions that were passed which effected important constitutional changes. Disappointed with Wesley's short notice of the 1763 Conference, we look elsewhere for information. In the edition of the first volume of the *Minutes of the Methodist Conference*, published in 1862, there is an Appendix of exceptional value. Among other documents, it contains six successive editions of the *Large Minutes* which were published during the life of John Wesley. The arrangement of the six editions in adjoining columns enables us to see changes that had been made when the several editions of the *Large Minutes* were issued. We are now concerned with the first column, headed 1753 or 1757, and the next, which bears the date 1763. Comparing the two columns, we think we can discover some items of business that show new legislation, passed by the Conference of 1763. Much legislation that we have already recorded in this and preceding volumes on John Wesley appears in the first column, and is repeated in the second; but we are now only concerned with some of the most important additions contained in the second column.

It is interesting to note that the Conference still declared its belief that God's design in raising up the People called Methodists was to reform the nation and, in particular, the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land. Proceeding to other matters, we find that in 1763 there were twenty-one circuits in England, seven in Ireland, two in Scotland, and two in Wales. Then, in another part of the proceedings of the Conference we get light on the embarrassment caused by the erection of preaching-houses in different places. In the *Large Minutes*, in the words of Wesley, the following statement occurs: 'Within these twelve or fifteen years several of our brethren in various parts, having no room which would contain the congregation, by the advice of the preachers have built houses for preaching capable of containing the usual number of hearers; but this has necessarily involved them in large debts. Their debt at Halifax, for instance, amounted two or three years ago to £200; that at Leeds to more than £300; that at Manchester to £350; that at Liverpool to £400; so that the whole debt contracted by building was, I apprehend, little short of £4,000. This the Societies to whom those houses belong are by no means

able to pay ; but the whole body of Methodists joining together can do it without inconvenience. Only let them cheerfully exert on so pressing an occasion the ability which God hath given them.' In this paragraph we see evidence of the growth of the 'connexional principle' which has been one of the chief causes of the strength and success of Methodism.

The multiplication of preaching-houses raised another question. The increase of the burden of debt did not stand alone. Methodism in 1763 was confronted with the danger which arises from imperfect legal settlements. The provisions of some of the deeds of the period still excite our wonder. Those which seem the best, such as the Bristol and Newcastle-on-Tyne deeds, are not satisfactory.[1] They were drawn up by Mr. Thornton, a London solicitor, in whom Wesley had great confidence. But in one respect at least they were unsatisfactory. They raise the questions, 'What was to happen at the death of the survivor of the Wesleys?' 'To whom would the right of appointing the preachers to the "Rooms" then revert?' The answer is, 'To the trustees.' Events in Bolton and elsewhere showed the danger of such an arrangement. The matter weighed on John Wesley's mind. After taking legal advice, a case was drawn up and laid before three eminent counsel, and a model deed was drafted on the lines they had recommended. A copy of that deed appears in the *Large Minutes* of 1763. The deed provides, among other things, that after the death of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and William Grimshaw, 'the trustees for the time being shall from time to time, and at all times for ever thereafter, permit such persons as shall be appointed at the yearly Conference of the People called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid ; *provided always* that the said persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's *Notes upon the New Testament*, and four volumes of sermons ; provided also that they preach in the said house . . . . evenings in every week, and at five o'clock on each morning following.'[2]

It is easy to see that certain alterations would have to be made, in the course of time, in these provisos. One stands

[1] *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 315–317.
[2] See *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, i. 606, 608.

out with exceptional prominence. The deed contains no exact definition of the word Conference. It is well known that it was not until 1784 that this serious defect was so clearly seen that it had to be remedied by a deed, executed by John Wesley, in which the identity of the Conference was established, and its appointments to chapels were legalized.

In the *Large Minutes* of 1763 we find directions to the assistants on the subject of attending the services of the Church of England. They were directed to exhort those 'who had been brought up in the Church' to attend its services constantly and to set them the example themselves. The question widens its scope. It is asked, 'Are we not unawares, by little and little, tending to a separation from the Church?' The reply is of great value. In order to check the tendency to separation the following advices are given to assistants:

(1) Let all our preachers go to church. (2) Let all our people go constantly. (3) Receive the sacrament at every opportunity. (4) Warn all against niceness in hearing: a great and prevailing evil. (5) Warn them likewise against despising the prayers of the Church. (6) Against calling our Society a Church, or the Church. (7) Against calling our preachers ministers, our houses meeting-houses. (8) Call them plain preaching-houses. (9) Do not license them as such. The proper form of a petition to the judges is, 'A. B. desires to have his house in C. licensed for public worship.' (10) Do not license yourself, till you are constrained; and then not as a Dissenter, but a Methodist preacher. It is time enough, when you are prosecuted, to take the oaths. Thereby you are licensed.

Reading these directions to assistants, we seem to be listening to Charles Wesley's voice. It is possible that the warning against calling 'our Society a Church' may have arisen from the fact that on July 6, 1763, shortly before the Conference, Vincent Perronet wrote a letter to Charles Wesley in which the following sentence occurs: 'It is undoubtedly a trying time for the poor Methodist Church.'[1] We are sure that the phrase would startle Charles Wesley, and that his amazement would not diminish when he read the following words: 'But the Keeper of the vineyard will watch over it, notwithstanding all the craft and all the violence of the enemy.' But we are chiefly concerned to find that, in the matter of licensing the

[1] See Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 219.

preaching-houses, John Wesley still failed to understand the fact that such licences were issued under the conditions of the Toleration Act. That Act was passed for the relief of Dissenters. He had only to look at the licence of the 'New Room' in Bristol to see that fact. The 'Room' was certified as 'a place of meeting of a Congregation or Assembly for Religious Worship conformable to the Statute made in the first year of the reign of the late King William and Queen Mary intituled an Act for Exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws.' As to the preachers, the Toleration Act knew nothing about granting a licence to a man in his character as a Methodist preacher. We have seen that several of them obtained licences under the Act who declared themselves to be Methodists; having done so, they accepted licences in which they were described as 'Dissenting' preachers. It is certain that these directions to assistants were soon omitted from the *Large Minutes*. In the editions published after 1763 they were not inserted.

Wesley's brief description of the proceedings of the Conference is disappointing, but it is possible to further supplement it. We find that John Pawson was present. He is an outstanding figure among the early Methodist preachers. In 1763 he completed the first year of his itinerancy, and went to London from the York circuit with Richard Henderson, one of his colleagues. From his account of his visit to London we learn two important facts. He says that at the Conference of 1763 the 'Preachers' Fund' was first begun, and then gives this description of its origin. 'It was said that several of the preachers were growing old, and asked what should they do for support, if they should live to be past their labour. And, as others of them had families, what would become of their widows and children, if their husbands and fathers should die and leave them behind? Being young and inexperienced, I was utterly amazed at hearing this. For I thought that every Christian minister had an entire confidence in God, respecting temporal as well as spiritual things, so as to be perfectly free from all care as to what might befall either himself or family.' We do not know how long John Pawson's 'amazement' continued. He was not married until 1773; after that it is probable that he would see the advisability of

establishing a Preachers' Fund. The Conference of 1763 discussed the matter. A plan was proposed and adopted, and the Preachers' Fund was established.

Before we turn away from this important Conference we must record a serious fact which is mentioned by John Pawson. He does not state the circumstances that led to a memorable 'scene' that disturbed the deliberations of the Conference, but we can understand how it might arise during free discussions on regulations that had to be observed by all the preachers. It will be sufficient to quote John Pawson's description of the incident. He says: 'At this Conference some of the preachers began to call in question the power Mr. Wesley exercised over them and the Societies. But Mr. Harris pleaded his cause effectually, and, among other things, said, "If Mr. Wesley should, at any time, abuse his power, who will weep for him, if his own children will not?" These simple words had an astonishing effect upon the minds of the preachers; they were all in tears on every side, and gave up the matter entirely.' We cannot accept the closing words of this description, but we can understand Pawson's enthusiasm for the speaker. He calls him 'that faithful servant of God, the Welsh apostle, Mr. Howell Harris.'[1]

During the remainder of this eventful year Wesley found it expedient to give his chief attention to the London Society. But he visited Norwich and other places that needed his special care. It is a relief to watch him as he makes his way, in August, to Wales. The strain on him had been very great, and he needed work in pleasant surroundings. On August 19 he rode from Brecknock to Trevecca. The Seven Years' War was ended. He saw Harris, relieved of his military duties, resting at home. He says: 'Howell Harris's house is one of the most elegant places which I have seen in Wales The little chapel, and all things round about it, are finished in an uncommon taste, and the gardens, orchards, fish-ponds, and the mount adjoining make the place a little paradise. He thanks God for these things, and looks through them. About six score persons are now in the family; all diligent, all constantly employed, all fearing God and working righteousness. I preached at ten to a crowded audience.' The next day he rode through 'one of the pleasantest

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, iv. 26–27.

countries in the world.' As he passed through Monmouthshire and Brecknockshire his love of beautiful scenery was satisfied. He boldly says: 'All England does not afford such a line of fifty miles' length for fields, meadows, woods, brooks, and gently rising mountains, fruitful to the very top.' Then he and his companions came to Carmarthen. In the evening he preached to a large number of deeply-attentive people who stood on the Castle Green.

When John Wesley got back to London on October 1 he found the dwelling-house at the Foundery in ruins, the greater part of it being taken down in order to undergo a thorough repair. He declares that as much remained as he wanted, and that six foot square sufficed for him by day or by night. It is clear that the exhilaration produced by his journey in Wales had not vanished. During the next week he devoted much time in endeavouring 'to confirm those who had been shaken as to the important doctrine of Christian perfection, either by its wild defenders, or wise opposers, who much availed themselves of that wildness.' Then on Monday, October 10, he set out for Norwich, a place that continued to give him much concern. Reaching the city on the Wednesday, he preached there. On the Friday evening he read the 'Rules' to the people and said that only those who were resolved to keep them might continue in the Society. The frankness of his address may be judged from its closing words: 'For many years I have had more trouble with this Society than with half the Societies in England put together. With God's help, I will try you one year longer, and I hope you will bring forth better fruit.' On Sunday his temper was tried. In the afternoon many of Wheatley's 'lambs' were present, and 'roared like lions.' The following Sunday, in the evening, before he had concluded his sermon, the mob made a little disturbance; but he says: 'Let us only get the lambs in order, and I will quickly tame the bears.' He derived much encouragement during this visit at a leaders' meeting which he held. He describes the leaders as 'a company of steady, lively, zealous persons.' That encouragement was increased by his conversation with most of the members of the Society. None seemed to have lost ground since he was there last. So he rode away from Norwich with brightened hopes.

Wesley returned to London on Saturday, October 29. The

Societies there claimed his chief attention to the end of the year. When he had finished visiting the classes he found that since February a hundred and seventy-five members had been separated from the Society, and of that number a hundred and six had left on Maxfield's account. As he thought of his experiences during this year he must have sorrowed over many of its events. Among those who had followed Maxfield were some of his own 'choicest friends.' Those who knew him well declared that this division was his heaviest trial. But his courage revived. As he completed his entries in the London membership book he thought over the journeys of the year, and recognized the undeniable fact that a remarkable revival of religion had pervaded the Methodist Societies in other parts of the country. We have the benefit of his musings. He says:

> Here I stood and looked back on the late occurrences. Before Thomas Walsh left England God began that great work which has continued ever since without any considerable intermission. During the whole time many have been convinced of sin, many justified, and many backsliders healed. But the peculiar work of this season has been what St. Paul calls 'the perfecting of the saints.' Many persons in London, in Bristol, in York, and in various parts, both of England and Ireland, have experienced so deep and universal a change as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive. After a deep conviction of inbred sin, of their total fall from God, they have been so filled with faith and love (and generally in a moment) that sin vanished and they found from that time no pride, anger, desire, or unbelief. They could rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Now, whether we call this the destruction or suspension of sin, it is a glorious work of God—such a work as, considering both the depth and extent of it, we never saw in these kingdoms before.
>
> It is possible some who spoke in this manner were mistaken; and it is certain some have lost what they then received. A few (very few, compared to the whole number) first gave way to enthusiasm, then to pride, next to prejudice and offence, and at last separated from their brethren. But, although this laid a huge stumbling-block in the way, still the work of God went on. Nor has it ceased to this day in any of its branches. God still convinces, justifies, sanctifies. We have lost only the dross, the enthusiasm, the prejudice and offence. The pure gold remains, faith working by love, and, we have ground to believe, increases daily.[1]

Wesley's records for the year 1763 end with a short paragraph which awakens the memories of past times. On Monday,

[1] *Journal*, v. 40–41.

December 26, he began preaching at 'a large, commodious place' in Bartholomew's Close. He preached there again on the Wednesday of that week, and at both times 'with peculiar liberty of spirit.' The Rev. T. E. Brigden, in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1907,[1] threw light on the fact that 'the place' in which Wesley preached was 'the chapel of the old priory.' He has caused us to dream pleasant dreams by sending us a sketch-plan which shows the position of the chapel in relation to the great St. Bartholomew's Church. The days when the Wesleys and Whitefield used to preach in that church, and when Richard Thomas Bateman was the only clergyman in London who allowed them a similar privilege, pass slowly before us. The chapel of the old priory, before Wesley occupied it for a short time, had been used by the Presbyterians; so it seems to us a meeting-place of the streams of English Church history.[2]

[1] p. 559. [2] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 30–32.

# XI

## BRIGHTER DAYS

It has been necessary to describe the extravagances that did so much injury to the London Society in 1763. But we must remember that in other parts of the country the progress of the teaching of the doctrine of holiness was not checked by the outburst of storms of 'enthusiasm'; it was steadily illustrated by the experience of an increasing number of consistent Christian people. We are apt to think that the sudden outbreak at Otley marked the emergence of a new doctrine in Methodism. Such was not the case. We do not wonder that Wesley rejoiced when he heard the news. It stirred old memories; it brightened hopes that had never vanished from his mind. We must remember that the subject of Christian perfection had been discussed in several of the early Conferences. In those conversations efforts had been made to settle a definition of a confessedly difficult doctrine; what was lacking was an illustration of its meaning which would lift it out of the sphere of speculation and make it a living force in the lives of the Methodist people.

The doctrine of holiness occupied a conspicuous place in John Wesley's preaching and pastoral work. He so often explained and enforced it that some people in the present day think that it is a doctrine of which he was the original discoverer. That is a delusion. It is generally admitted that the Methodist Societies are the direct successors of the Religious Societies established in England about the year 1678 by Dr. Anthony Horneck, who was assisted by Mr. Smithies, a clergyman who was a lecturer at St. Michael's, Cornhill, London. Dr. Horneck drew up rules for his Societies. At their head this rule stands: 'All that enter the Society shall resolve upon a holy and serious life.' There can be no doubt of Dr. Horneck's conception of the meaning of 'a holy life.' Those who are acquainted with his sermons are aware

that his teaching on the subject anticipated the doctrines brought into clear light in the eighteenth century. But he did not stand alone. At a later stage Dr. Woodward drew up the 'orders' of the Religious Society that met in Poplar, London. In the document there is this declaration: 'The sole design of this Society being to promote real holiness of heart and life, it is absolutely necessary that the persons who enter into it do seriously resolve, by the grace of God, to apply themselves to all means proper to accomplish these blessed ends. Trusting in the divine power and gracious conduct of the Holy Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to excite, advance, and perfect all good in us.' To accomplish this end the third 'order' of the Society directs: 'That the members of this Society shall meet together one evening in the week at a convenient place, in order to encourage each other in practical holiness, by discoursing on such subjects as tend thereunto; observing the Holy Scriptures as their rule, and praying to God for His grace and blessing.' The 'Orders' of the Poplar Society were adopted in other parts of the country. They most certainly show that the pursuit of holiness was placed in the forefront of the proceedings of the Religious Societies.[1]

John Wesley was well acquainted with the objects of the Religious Societies in their best days. In addition to their influence, we must remember that, when at Oxford, he read with close attention Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*. He was greatly impressed by the book, and he and his mother had a correspondence with each other on points he was inclined to question. When he assembled the little group of men in his room at Lincoln College, the conversation was often toned by Jeremy Taylor's teaching. In a merry moment the Merton wits devised a name for this small assembly of serious men. They called it 'The Holy Club'; and, in the best sense, the name was appropriate. Apart from other studies, the search after 'real holiness in heart and life' became Wesley's absorbing passion. It led him away from Oxford. It drew him over the ocean into the wilds of Georgia. Disappointed with his position and work in Savannah, he was filled with a desire to wander away with the Indian tribes and live with them, as a missionary, in their towns and hunting-camps. His longing for 'holiness,' as he then understood the word, was the secret of

[1] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 9–15.

his restlessness. He had to learn the lesson that was taught to Nicodemus, who came to Jesus ' by night ' : ' Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' He understood what is meant by 'being born from above' at a later stage of his quest. After his experience in the meeting of the Religious Society in the Aldersgate Street Room, London, he caught sight of that path through the wilderness which is called ' the way of holiness.' Although he says little about his own advance along that path, with a beautiful enthusiasm he sought to guide others into the great experiences of conversion and holiness—experiences which have for their richest reward the constant companionship of Jesus Christ.

The year 1764 was crowded with work. The condition of the London Society caused Wesley to remain there through the first quarter of the year, but the call of the country was insistent, and at length prevailed. It is true that in January he made his way to Witney. His description of the Society there is one of the beautiful vignettes which do so much to relieve the sombreness of his *Journal* during the period we have now reached. He arrived in the town on January 17, and preached in the evening and the next day. The congregations were large and attentive; they much impressed him. He says: ' This is such a people as I have not seen—so remarkably diligent in business, and at the same time of so quiet a spirit, and so calm and civil in their behaviour.' Riding through Oxford to Henley, he gives us a picture that has the force of contrast. ' The people here bear no resemblance to those of Witney. I found a wild, staring congregation, many of them void both of common sense and common decency. I spoke exceeding plain to them all, and reproved some of them sharply.' He seems to have made up his mind to take a ' final leave ' of Henley, a mood which fortunately passed away.

Getting back to London on February 2, he preached again in the Foundery, which was ready for reoccupation. After inspecting the alterations that had been made, he found that the building was ' firm and safe.' It was well that the work of repair had been effectively done, for it had been discovered that the main timbers of the old Foundery were quite decayed. The preaching-room had been considerably enlarged. The sacramental services of the London Methodists once more demanded attention. If John Wesley absented

himself and resumed his visits to the country Societies, a difficult situation was created. Wesley's first thought was that his brother might, as in the old days, come to London; but Charles Wesley was out of health, and seems to have been disinclined to adopt that solution of the problem. The stewards of the Society advised John Wesley to avail himself of the services of John Jones, who, as we have seen, had been ordained by Erasmus, a bishop of the Greek Church. In 1765 and 1766 John Jones was the superintendent of the circuit, and was held in high esteem by the members of the London Societies. But, as we have seen, the thought of the administration of the sacrament by him excited the indignation of Charles Wesley. However, the difficulty was great, and it was necessary that John Wesley should come to a decision. On March 1 he wrote to Charles Wesley as follows: 'You "have no thoughts of venturing to London before May!" Then I must indeed "do the best I can." So I must comply with the advice of the stewards, as well as my own judgement, and insist upon John Jones assisting me on Sundays. I have delayed all this time purely out of tenderness to you. Adieu!'

On March 12 John Wesley left London and set out for Bristol. At the end of the week he had a meeting there with 'several serious clergymen.' A project had been long in his mind which he thought he could accomplish. He had desired that there might be an open, avowed union between all who preached 'those fundamental truths, Original Sin and Justification by Faith, producing inward and outward holiness.' It must be remembered that the number of evangelical clergymen was increasing at this time. Wesley's thought of an avowed union between them and the Methodists demands our respect. But he does not seem to have been encouraged by the meeting in Bristol. He confesses that all his endeavours had been ineffectual, and he records his conclusion that God's time for such a union had not fully come. But he did not abandon the idea. In a few months he made another attempt on a larger scale.

On Monday, March 19, John Wesley set out from Bristol on his visitation of the Northern Societies. He found much to encourage him; and, as we follow him in his tour, we find that in some places where riots had raged he preached to large congregations of attentive people. Such was the case at

Wednesbury. The editor of his *Journal* appends an illuminating note to his descriptions of this visit which explained the cessation of the attacks on the Methodists. It conveys a lesson which was only slowly learned by Wesley. One day, when mobs thought they could identify a Methodist preacher by his aspect and clothing, a Quaker rode through Wednesbury. The mob rose, swore he was a Methodist preacher, pulled him from his horse, and threatened to throw him down a coal-pit! There are limits to the non-resistance theory. The Quaker prosecuted his assailants at the Assizes, and from that time the tumults in the town ceased. In contrast with his experience at Wednesbury, Wesley found at Derby a mob that defeated his purpose to preach in the market-place. He had been told that there seemed to be a general inclination in the town, even among people of fashion, to hear him; so he determined to seize his opportunity. His informant assured him that he had seen the mayor, who had said that he did not apprehend there would be the least disturbance; but if there should be anything of the kind, he would take care to suppress it. A multitude of people had gathered in the market-place. They listened quietly until Wesley announced his text. Then there was a continuous roar, which made it impossible for him to be heard. He gave up the attempt, walked quietly away, a crowd of people following him. Stones were thrown, but no one was hurt. It was, however, clear that it was not safe to preach in the open air in Derby.

On Wednesday, April 18, John Wesley reached Scarborough. In the evening he preached in the open air to a multitude of people; and all but a few noisy children behaved remarkably well. The next day the 'Room' was filled at the early morning service; and in the evening he again preached to a great crowd. The progress of Methodism in Scarborough impressed him. The Society had been increased fourfold. On a previous visit noise and tumult had interfered with his services; but now the Methodists enjoyed great quietness, 'since God put it into the heart of an honest magistrate to still the madness of the people.'

It was under these encouraging circumstances that Wesley determined to renew his attempt to effect an alliance with the evangelical clergy of the Church of England. His first attempt, as he tells us, was made two years and a half before that time.

But since then the number of the evangelical clergy had considerably increased, and it seemed as if his failure might be turned into success. He had been in communication with Lord Dartmouth, who had great influence with the evangelical clergy. During this visit to Scarborough, on April 19, 1764, he recopied the old letter which he had written some years before, prefixing to it this paragraph :

> Rev. Sir,—Near two years and a half ago I wrote the following letter. You will please to observe (1) That I propose no more therein than is the bounden duty of every Christian ; (2) That *you* may comply with this proposal, whether any other does or not. I myself have endeavoured so to do for many years, though I have been almost alone therein, and although many, the more earnestly I talk of peace, the more zealously make themselves ready for battle.
>
> I am, reverend sir,
>
> Your affectionate brother,
>
> John Wesley.

Instead of dispatching his recopied letter at once, he thought it wise to send it to Lady Huntingdon. He made out a list of between fifty and sixty clergymen to whom his *eirenicon* should be sent, and kept it by him for a time. It will be seen that his action in this matter was free from precipitancy. After waiting for some days, he sent out his letter to the clergymen on his list.

John Wesley's letter to the clergy is printed in his *Journal*, and should he consulted by all who are interested in his attempt to effect a union between himself and the evangelical clergy. It is only necessary to indicate the conditions laid down as essential to such a union. In his letter Wesley names three essential doctrines on which those clergymen to whom he appealed must be agreed—Original Sin, Justification by Faith, and Holiness of heart and life ; ' provided their life be answerable to their doctrine.' Then he proceeds :

> But what union would you desire among these ? Not a union in opinions. They might agree or disagree, touching absolute decrees on the one hand and perfection on the other. Not a union in expressions. These may still speak of the imputed righteousness, and those of the merits of Christ. Not a union with regard to outward order. Some may still remain quite regular, some quite irregular ; and some partly regular and partly irregular. But these things being as they are, as each is persuaded in his own mind, is it not a most desirable thing that we should :

(1) Remove hindrances out of the way? Not judge one another, not despise one another, not envy one another? Not be displeased at one another's gifts or success, even though greater than our own? Not wait for one another's halting, much less wish for it, or rejoice therein?

Never speak disrespectfully, slightly, coldly, or unkindly of each other; never repeat each other's faults, mistakes, or infirmities, much less listen for and gather them up; never say or do anything to hinder each other's usefulness, either directly or indirectly? Is it not a most desirable thing that we should:

(2) Love as brethren? Think well of and honour one another? Wish all good, all grace, all gifts, all success, yea, greater than our own, to each other? Expect God will answer our wish, rejoice in every appearance thereof, and praise Him for it? Readily believe good of each other, as readily as we once believed evil?

Speak respectfully, honourably, kindly of each other; defend each other's character; speak all the good we can of each other; recommend one another where we have influence; each help the other on in his work, and enlarge his influence by all the honest means he can?

This is the union which I have long sought after; and is it not the duty of every one of us so to do? Would it not be far better for ourselves? A means of promoting both our holiness and happiness? Would it not remove much guilt from those who have been faulty in any of these instances, and much pain from those who have kept themselves pure? Would it not be far better for the people, who suffer severely from the clashings and contentions of their leaders, which seldom fail to occasion many unprofitable, yea, hurtful, disputes among them? Would it not be better even for the poor, blind world, robbing them of their sport, 'Oh, they cannot agree among themselves'? Would it not be better for the whole work of God, which would then deepen and widen on every side?

'But it will never be; it is utterly impossible.' Certainly it is with men. Who imagines we can do this? That it can be effected by any human power? All nature is against it, every infirmity, every wrong temper and passion; love of honour and praise, of power, of pre-eminence; anger, resentment, pride; long contracted habit, and prejudice lurking in ten thousand forms. The devil and all his angels are against it. For if this takes place, how shall his kingdom stand? All the world, all that know not God, are against it, though they may seem to favour it for a season. Let us settle this in our hearts, that we may be utterly cut off from all dependence on our own strength or wisdom.

But surely 'with God all things are possible'; therefore 'all things are possible to him that believeth'; and this union is proposed only to them that believe, that show their faith by their works.

John Wesley's attempt to bring about a union of the evangelical clergy failed. Out of the fifty or sixty men to whom he made his appeal only three 'vouchsafed' him an

answer. Hoping against hope, he continued to expect encouragement; but in 1769 he abandoned his attempt and wisely turned away from the consideration of winning the friendship of the evangelical clergy and fixed his attention on the greater problem of preserving the unity of the Methodist preachers.[1]

On Good Friday, April 20, John Wesley preached at Robin Hood's Bay, a place he often visited in his northern journeys. In the evening he preached in 'the new house' at Whitby. It must have refreshed him to ride over the great moorlands that were answering to the spring sunshine and prophesying of the coming of summer days. He spent Easter Day in Whitby, preaching in the 'Room' at five and eight o'clock in the morning. He attended the service in the church, where there was such a number of communicants as had not been seen there for fifty years. In the evening he preached 'under the cliff,' choosing his station for the sake of those 'who were not able to get up the hill.' The crowd was so large that, though his voice was clear and loud, some of those who stood afar off could not hear. But the bulk of the congregation seemed both to hear and understand. His comment on the service is: 'How ripe for the gospel is this place!' Those who know Whitby will easily imagine these scenes; some will wonder if, after his evening service, he mounted the hill and spent some time in musing among the ruins of the abbey which bears St. Hilda's honoured name.

After visiting several places in the neighbourhood, Wesley, on April 28, arrived in Newcastle. He preached the next day in the Orphan House both morning and evening. This visit brought him great gladness. His record is memorable: 'I soon found what spirit the people were of. No jar, no contention is here; but all are peaceably and lovingly striving together for the hope of the gospel. And what can hurt the Methodists, so called, but the Methodists? Only let them not fight one another; let not brother lift up sword against brother, and "no weapon formed against them shall prosper."'

Wesley stayed in Newcastle and its neighbourhood until nearly the end of May. Then he commenced his journey to Scotland. On Wednesday, May 23, after resting at Alnwick,

[1] *Journal*, v. 60–63; *Minutes of Conference*, 1769, 87, 8vo ed.; *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xii. 29–34.

he rode over the sands to Holy Island. He says that it was once the famous seat of a bishop; but, at the time of his visit, it was the residence of a few poor families who lived chiefly by fishing. When John Wesley visited Holy Island he stood at one of the chief centres from which men, in early days, went out to evangelize England. In a former volume we have seen him in Ireland standing on the banks of the Shannon and looking at the ruins of the seven churches at Clonmacnois.[1] Watching him in Holy Island, we think of the men who, leaving Ireland, made their way to their new home in Iona under the leadership of St. Columba. Then we remember the little company of Irish monks that settled in Lindisfarne under the strong and inspiring government of St. Aidan. We think of St. Chad and St. Cuthbert, men whose names stand out among the great evangelists of the Midlands and the North of England. They lived and worked in times which Sir Henry H. Howorth has called *The Golden Days of the Early English Church.* The writer of a note in John Wesley's *Journal* reminds us that the Celtic Church differed in some particulars from the Church of Rome, and was not under the jurisdiction of the Popes. We might go further. A difference in tone and spirit between the two Churches was strongly marked. No one can read the story of the early Irish missionaries in this country without admiring their self-sacrificing work for the good of the English people. There is a tone of sadness in Wesley's reference to the condition of Holy Island when he visited it. He saw the ruins of the cathedral. It appeared to him to have been a lofty and elegant building, 'the middle aisle being almost entire.' He looked at the adjoining monastery, and thought of long-vanished days. Then he awoke to the 'living present.' He took his stand in what was once the market-place. Almost all the inhabitants of the island gathered around him. He preached to them, and distributed some little books among them, 'for which they were exceeding thankful.'[2]

Wesley resumed his journey to Scotland, and on Saturday, May 26, he preached at Edinburgh, in the evening, on the Calton Hill. It was the time of the meeting of the General

[1] *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 72.

[2] We commend to our readers Sir Henry H. Howorth's interesting and authoritative volumes on *The Golden Days of the Early English Church.* He wrote them when President of the Royal Archaeological Institute.

Assembly, and many of the Presbyterian ministers were present. The next morning he preached in the High School yard, and in the evening on the Calton Hill. Notwithstanding the storm that was blowing, there was 'a huge congregation,' and the people listened to him for an hour and a half. He tells us that 'he fully delivered his soul'! The next day he spent a long time at the General Assembly, listening to a debate that lasted for five hours. When recording the fact in his *Journal*, he expresses the opinion that the matter in dispute might have been settled in five minutes. On Saturday, June 2, he was in Aberdeen, where he was again heartily welcomed. He preached in the evening and the next morning in the College Hall. He also preached to crowded audiences in the College Kirk at Old Aberdeen, and in the College Close at New Aberdeen. The congregation at the latter place was so exceeding large that many were not able to hear. He spent some time with the Methodist Society, and was pleased with its condition. 'Nothing was needed but a larger house,' and he rejoiced at the fact that the foundation of one had been laid. He admitted that the Methodists in Aberdeen had little money; but he put his trust in God. Later in his tour he revisited Aberdeen, and preached twice in the shell of the 'new house.' The site was in Queen Street, and on it a commodious chapel, in the octagon style, was erected.

Two events in this visit to Scotland stand out with special prominence. On Saturday, June 16, Wesley returned to Edinburgh and preached to a large congregation on the Calton Hill. A still larger number of people assembled at seven o'clock the next morning in the High School yard. When the service was over he was informed that the Lord's Supper was to be administered in the West Kirk. The information caused him much perplexity; he confesses that he knew not what to do. At length he conquered his prejudice and went to the West Kirk.[1] He gives a minute description of the Scotch manner of administering the Sacrament. He must have found consolation in expressing the opinion, 'How much more simple, as well as more solemn, is the service of the Church of England.'

The second event which increases the interest of this visit

[1] St. Cuthbert's Parish Church. Henry Moore says that Wesley 'laid aside his last portion of bigotry,' and partook of the ordinance. *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 250.

to Scotland concerns a friendship which began at this time. He met Lady D'Arcy Maxwell, who was much impressed by the doctrines he preached. A correspondence began between them soon after he left Edinburgh, which was continued for many years. In September, 1764, Lady Maxwell resolved to join the Methodist Society, a fact which gave Wesley much pleasure. Her religious experience teaches lessons that are helpful to those who know little about a sudden conversion. With timid steps they walk along a path which shines more and more to the perfect day. It is well to record the consoling words which Wesley wrote to her in a letter from Ireland on July 5, 1765. He says: 'It may be, He that does all things well has wise reasons, though not apparent to us, for working more gradually in you than He has done in late years in most others. It may please Him to give you the consciousness of His favour, the conviction that you are accepted through the Beloved, by almost insensible degrees, like the dawning of the day. And it is all one how it began, so you do but walk in the light. Be this given in an instant, or by degrees, hold it fast. Christ is yours; He hath loved you; He hath given Himself for you. Therefore, you shall be holy as He is holy, both in heart and in all manner of conversation.' These wise words remind us of Wesley's own religious progress. He admits in his letter that he wishes Lady Maxwell to experience 'an instantaneous work'; but the memories of the past awoke in him, and the thought of the 'gradual work,' which he had experienced, restrained his hand.[1]

John Wesley returned to Newcastle on June 19, and soon began his journey to the South of England. On Saturday, July 21, he reached Madeley, 'an exceeding pleasant village, encompassed with trees and hills.' Staying with John Fletcher, we can understand his glowing words: 'It was a great comfort to me to converse once more with a Methodist of the old stamp, denying himself, taking up his cross, and resolved to be "altogether a Christian."' Fletcher was not yet married, and we can understand how his loneliness was relieved as his old friend told him of the things that had happened since they last met. The next day Madeley Church was crowded. In the morning and the afternoon Wesley preached. The congregations were so large that Grimshaw's way of meeting a serious

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 324.

difficulty was imitated. A window near the pulpit was taken down, and the people who stood in the churchyard could hear. The next morning, at five o'clock, Wesley preached again in the church, and many people stood in the churchyard. His comment on the services is : ' Mr. Grimshaw, at his first coming to Haworth, had not such a prospect as this. There are many adversaries indeed ; but yet they cannot shut the open and effectual door.'[1]

Leaving Madeley, Wesley spent some days in Wales. Then, on Saturday, August 4, he reached Bristol. After preaching on the Sunday, he began the yearly Conference on Monday. If we had to rely on his description of its proceedings, given in his *Journal*, we should judge that, with one exception, the preachers present confined their attention to matters of routine. He says, ' The great point I now laboured for was a good understanding, with all our brethren of the clergy, who are heartily engaged in propagating vital religion.' The Conference seems to have lasted from Monday until Friday. We must satisfy our desire for information by putting aside the *Journal* and consulting another source of information.

When we see that twelve clergymen were present at the Conference we think of Wesley's letter containing proposals for the union of the evangelical clergy. That letter had elicited a faint response ; but it is clear, from Wesley's description of the topics discussed at the Conference, that the subject was raised and discussed. But, strictly speaking, ' the union of the evangelical clergy of England ' was not a matter lying within the province of the Conference. Wesley's action in writing his letter might have come under consideration, and a conversation might have taken place on the question. We are inclined to think that the presence of the clergy indicated their wish to introduce another subject, and to get a decision from the Conference that would commit its members to a course of action. As the Conference was meeting in Bristol, Charles Wesley had no difficulty in attending its sessions. John Wesley had written to him on May 25 asking the blunt question, ' Is there any reason why you and I should have no further intercourse with each other? ' John Wesley knew of none.[2] By his attendance at the Conference it would seem that Charles

[1] Madeley Church, at this time, was a small building. Long after Fletcher's days it was pulled down and the present large church was erected.

[2] John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 71, *note*.

Wesley's intercourse with his brother had been resumed. But we know that the principal subject that drew the clergy to the Bristol Conference was that which had been raised by Samuel Walker and urged by Henry Venn some time before. They introduced it again. They asked that the Methodist preachers should be withdrawn from the parishes in which there was an evangelical clergyman. The Conference must have been surprised when Charles Wesley declared that ' if he were a parish minister, *the preachers should not preach in his parish.*' That declaration roused the spirit of the Methodist Conference. John Wesley spoke out strongly, and declared himself firmly fixed in the sentiments he had expressed in his letter to Samuel Walker.[1]

The preachers unanimously agreed with him. The proposal fell to the ground. Myles closes his account of this incident by saying that, as these clergymen would not unite with John Wesley, except upon their own terms, he was obliged to abandon the idea altogether.[2]

After the Conference, John Wesley resumed his work of visiting the Societies. He was at Norwich on October 12; and in his *Journal* we find a note which has still its significance. He says:

I returned to Norwich, and inquired into the state of the Society. I have seen no people in all England or Ireland so changeable as this. This Society in 1755 consisted of eighty-three members; two years after, of a hundred and thirty-four; in 1758 it was shrunk to a hundred and ten. In March, 1759, we took the Tabernacle, and within a month the Society was increased to above seven hundred and sixty; but nearly five hundred of these had formerly been with James Wheatley, and, having been scattered abroad, now ran together, they hardly knew why. Few of them were thoroughly awakened; most deeply ignorant; all bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, having never had any rule or order among them, but every man doing what was right in his own eyes. It was not, therefore, strange that the next year only five hundred and seven of these were left. In 1761 they were further reduced, namely, to four hundred and twelve. I cannot tell how it was that in 1762 they were increased again to six hundred and thirty, but the mood soon changed, so that in 1763 they were shrunk to three hundred and ten. This large reduction was owing to the withdrawing the sacrament, to which they had been accustomed from the time the Tabernacle was built. They are now sunk to a hundred and seventy-four; and now probably the tide will turn again.

[1] See p. 31 *ante*.

[2] Myles's *Chronological History*, 104–105, fourth ed.

On December 8 Wesley visited an old man in London for whom he had a profound respect. In 1741 he was the chairman of the Middlesex justices at a time when riotous mobs were attacking the Methodists. One day he waited on Wesley and informed him that he and the other Middlesex magistrates had received *orders from above* to do him justice whenever he applied to them, and that he had no need to suffer these mobs to molest him. By his action and his influence, and the co-operation of the other justices, mob assaults speedily ceased in London.[1] Wesley describes him as 'a minister of God to us in repressing the madness of the people.' Methodists should never forget the name of Sir John Ganson. In 1764 he was more than ninety years of age, and was still majestic in decay. In the evening of the day when Wesley visited him he was touched by the hand of death. 'He praised God all night, and died in the morning.'

[1] See *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 39.

## XII

## A REGRETTABLE INCIDENT

THOMAS JACKSON says that Charles Wesley spent the greater part of the year 1765 in Bristol; or, if he devoted as much time to London as he had long been accustomed to do, that Mrs. Wesley accompanied him there; so that their epistolary correspondence was interrupted.[1] Whatever we may think of this explanation, there can be no doubt that during 1765 we are not able to record any important act of assistance he rendered his brother. It was a year that taxed John Wesley's strength, and in which he specially needed the comradeship of a familiar friend.

John Wesley remained in charge of the London Society until nearly the end of March. Now and then he went to some distant town, but he came back to London after a short absence. At the time we have reached we know that he was capable of riding sixty miles in a day. His strength had returned, and he comforted himself with the thought that he was young once more. But London was only one of the places in his extensive 'parish.' When spring came he felt that he must visit Ireland. Leaving John Jones and his colleagues in charge of the London Societies, he set out for the North of England, getting to Chester on Tuesday, March 26. At Parkgate he found several ships ready to sail for Ireland, but they were weather-bound. During this time of waiting for a favourable wind he went to Liverpool. On Sunday, April 1, he preached in the Pitt Street Chapel, in which three new galleries had been built. Even with this addition 'the house' would not contain the congregations. He was impressed with the attention that was given to his sermon, and confesses that he was not sorry that the wind did not shift on Monday and Tuesday. On the Wednesday morning it shifted a little. Some impatient captains sailed; but in a few hours the wind

[1] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, ii. 223.

came full west again, so they were glad to return to Parkgate. It was clear that Ireland was not to be reached for some days; so, on April 4, Wesley rode to Bolton. There once more he rejoiced in the prosperity of the Society. The next day, Good Friday, he preached morning and evening in the house in which he had passed through such painful experiences.[1] We can understand his satisfaction when he wrote this record in his *Journal*: 'What a blessed calm has God at length given to this poor, shattered Society! For many years the men of bitter and contentious spirits were harassing them continually . . . and those they have left enjoy God and one another.'

John Wesley returned to Liverpool on April 6, and stayed there for several days waiting for a change of the wind. But he waited in vain. So on April 10 he altered his plans and set out northward. The next day he arrived at Kendal, and stayed at the house of an old friend. He was Francis Gilbert, the brother of Nathaniel Gilbert, whose fortunes we have followed.[2] After a visit to Antigua, Francis Gilbert in 1764 returned to England and settled for a time in Kendal. Several of the children of his elder brother lived with him in that town. One of them, Mary Gilbert, has left jottings in her diary that throw light on Wesley's visit. Under the date April 11, 1765, she says: 'At noon we had the pleasure of the Rev. Mr. Jno. Wesley's company to dinner; and in the evening he preached on Jer. viii. 22: "*Is there no balm in Gilead?*" &c. His conversation was very edifying, and God blest it to my poor soul.' On the next day she says: 'At five in the morning, Mr. Wesley preached on Ps. lxxxiv. 1: "*How amiable,*" &c. At night we took leave of him.' These simple records give, to those who have eyes to see, an opportunity of watching John Wesley in the quiet home of an old friend.[3]

On Saturday, April 13, John Wesley rode through much wind and rain to Barnard Castle, a town rich in Methodist traditions. A new 'house' had been erected there. He preached in it in the evening and the next morning. He had intended to preach 'abroad' on the Sunday evening, but the weather drove him and the people into the 'house.' After the service he spent an hour 'with those who once believed they were saved from sin.' He was disappointed to find that,

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 219–223. [2] See p. 44.
[3] Bretherton's *Early Methodism in and around Chester*, 75.

as in London, only about a third part of them held fast their confidence ; ' the rest had suffered loss, more or less, and two or three were shorn of their strength.' The next day he rode to Newcastle, where he was quite unexpected. He ascertained the condition of the Society, which was in a prosperous state. But he was disappointed to find that the ' George Bell spirit ' had influenced two of the members. They had declared that they did not need self-examination or to be taught of man ; and had advocated other of Bell's extravagances. Wesley interviewed them. Thinking that they possessed ' an advisable spirit,' he came to the conclusion that ' for the time, at least, the snare was broken.'

When Wesley was in Newcastle in May, 1764, he had a conversation with a young lady who had entered into the experience of conscious pardon some months before. For a time she hesitated to join the Methodists. She belonged to a family that resided near Durham who occupied a good social position among the people of the neighbourhood. She had a private income of a considerable amount. Making up her mind to become a Methodist, she threw herself heartily into the work of the Society. Her name was Mary Lewen. Wesley was much impressed by her ; and she became one of his well-known correspondents. She brought strong influence to bear on her niece, Miss Peggy Dale, who also became one of Wesley's correspondents. On Monday, April 22, 1765, Wesley and his two young friends, Mary Lewen and Peggy Dale, went to Alnwick in a post-chaise. The road was ' intolerably bad.' After preaching there, Wesley hastened to Berwick. On the moor the chaise was almost bogged. He did not get to the town until past seven o'clock. He was told that a congregation was waiting for him in the Town Hall, so he began the service without delay. The little party spent the night at an inn. About one in the morning there was a violent thunderstorm. Miss Lewen and Miss Dale had a disturbed night. As the house was full of dragoons, they were constrained to lodge in the same room with the landlady. The thunder crashed over the inn and the landlady awoke. Thoroughly terrified, she began to pray aloud. Miss Dale seized the opportunity ' to speak very closely to her.' In the storm she became an evangelist. When Wesley was afterwards told that Miss Dale's words seemed to sink into the

landlady's heart, he said, 'Who knows but they may bring forth fruit?' The party got back safely. Before leaving Newcastle, Wesley went to Durham with Miss Lewen and spent an hour with her father. Describing the interview, he says: 'He behaved with the utmost civility; said I had done his daughter more good than all the physicians could do, and he should be exceeding glad if she should go to London again at the approach of winter.'

John Wesley crossed the Border, and, in the evening of April 23, preached in Edinburgh. He seems to have made up his mind to reach Ireland by a new route. His visit was unexpected by the Edinburgh people. We know that he made his way by Glasgow and Stranraer to Port Patrick and Donaghadee, and that he remained in Ireland for two months. Before we follow him to Ireland it is imperative that we should refer to events which make his visit to Scotland of exceptional importance. There can be no doubt that the enthusiasm which had been created by his preaching on previous occasions had subsided. In some persons it had vanished, its place being taken by hostility. Wesley thought that his unexpected visit was seasonable, inasmuch as it enabled him to remove misunderstandings which had been created by the publication of a book that had made a deep impression in Scotland. He was mistaken in his judgement concerning the removal of the misunderstandings. They long lingered in many minds in Scotland.

Marshall Claxton's picture of 'John Wesley and his Friends at Oxford' is well known. When we look at it we are attracted by the figure of a man who is seated at Wesley's right hand. Glancing at the other men in the group, we recognize among them some who either opposed, embarrassed, or forsook Wesley in the years that followed the meetings of the 'Holy Club.' But the man seated at Wesley's right hand continued, nearly until the end of his life, a warm-hearted, enthusiastic friend of the great Methodist leader. We are familiar with the name of James Hervey. He died on Christmas Day, 1758—that 'day of peace among men in whom God is well pleased.' In the closing years of his life events occurred that estranged him from Wesley. The estrangement arose from circumstances which are clearly stated by Tyerman in his book on *The Oxford Methodists*. It should be noted that

this book was written as a supplementary volume to his *Life and Times of John Wesley*. That fact increases its value. In stating the cause of the breach of friendship between Wesley and Hervey we will take Tyerman as our guide. We confess that we are reluctant to deal with this much-disputed question ; but it is impossible to explain the reasons of the slow progress of Methodism in Scotland during Wesley's lifetime if we ignore it.

In a letter which Hervey wrote to Lady Frances Shirley on January 8, 1752, he says : ' I am one with the Methodists in my heart, though hampered and withheld from acting by a languishing constitution.' It is possible to be ' one in heart ' while divided in some matters of opinion. Such was the case with Wesley and Hervey. Tyerman says that Hervey was, in part at least, a Calvinist, and that Wesley was an Arminian. We have to keep that fact in mind if we are to trace the progress of ' the rift within the lute.' In 1751 and 1752 Wesley published his two pamphlets on *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints* and *Predestination Calmly Considered*. Hervey saw them. On March 24, 1752, he wrote a letter to a friend in which he says : ' Mr. Wesley's last piece I have not read through. I can't say I am fond of that controversy. The doctrine of the perseverance of Christ's servants, Christ's children, Christ's spouse, and Christ's members, I am thoroughly persuaded of. Predestination and reprobation I think of with fear and trembling. And if I should attempt to study them, I would study them on my knees.' Tyerman's judgement on this letter is that, on the question of the Perseverance of the Saints, Hervey was ' thoroughly opposed to Wesley ' ; on Predestination he was ' dubious.' Wesley would have been the first to say that such differences of opinion should not sever friendship.

In 1752 the livings of Weston Favell and Collingtree, in Northamptonshire, became vacant by the death of Hervey's father. They were offered to Hervey, and were accepted. His health was much shaken, but the duties of his parish were not too exacting. In 1753 he was busy with literary work. He was writing *Theron and Aspasio*. Like some of the books well known to those who are acquainted with the literature of the eighteenth century, it was in dialogue form. It will be enough to say that theological questions were discussed, and

that the severity of such discussions was relieved by interesting descriptions of rural scenery and incidents of country life.[1] Hervey's friendship with George Whitefield led him to submit to him part of his manuscript. Acknowledging its reception, Whitefield said: 'How many pardons shall I ask for mangling, and I fear murdering, your dear *Theron and Aspasio*? . . . As yet, I have only had time to peruse one of your sweet "Dialogues." As fast as possible, I shall read the rest. I am more than paid for my trouble by reading them.' A sensitive author might have considered that there was an ambiguity in this opinion that lessened its value; but Hervey knew Whitefield and went on his way. As the book advanced, he submitted portions of it to other persons in whose judgement he had confidence. Among them was John Wesley. He revised the first three 'Dialogues,' and sent them back 'with a few inconsiderable corrections.' Hervey was disappointed, and wrote to Wesley saying, 'You are not my friend if you do not take more liberty with me.' Wesley promised to do his critical work more thoroughly. He once more revised the manuscripts, and made several important corrections in them. The inevitable result followed. Tyerman says: 'Whether Wesley on this occasion had used the prerogatives of a *friend* to a greater extent than Hervey liked is a matter which has never been explained; but it is quite certain that, when Hervey's work was nearly ready for the public, Hervey and Wesley by some means had become alienated, and were no longer the warm-hearted friends they had been in former days.' We think that some light is thrown on the cause of the rupture of the friendship in a letter which Hervey wrote to Lady Frances Shirley on January 9, 1755. In it he says: 'Mr. John Wesley takes me roundly to task on the score of predestination; at which I am much surprised. Because a reader, ten times less penetrating than he is, may easily see that this doctrine (be it true or false) makes no part of my scheme; never comes under consideration; is purposely and carefully avoided. I cannot but fear he has some sinister design. Put the wolf's skin on the sheep, and the flock will shun him, the dogs will worry him. I do not charge such an artifice, but sometimes I cannot help forming a suspicion.'

[1] Tyerman gives Hervey's outline of his book, which shows the variety of its contents. See *The Oxford Methodists*, 291–293.

Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio* was advertised to be published on February 18, 1755. When it appeared it had a great sale. It did not escape criticism. Theologians were attracted by the terms in which the doctrine of 'imputed righteousness' was expressed. Among the critics was John Wesley, who declared that 'the imputed righteousness of Christ' was not a scriptural phrase. He said, 'I have had abundant proof that the frequent use of this unnecessary phrase, instead of "furthering men's progress in vital holiness," has made them satisfied without any holiness at all; yea, and encouraged them to work "all uncleanness with greediness."' But the sale of the book was so great that a second edition was called for and issued. In revising the work for this second edition it is said that Hervey obtained the assistance, not only of John Ryland, a Baptist minister, but also of William Cudworth, the minister of an Independent congregation in Margaret Street, London. Ten years before, Cudworth and John Wesley had carried on a sharp controversy, and the fires then kindled still burned. The association of Hervey with Cudworth soon produced serious effects.

In July, 1755, Hervey wrote a letter to Lady Frances Shirley in which he declared that he had no connexion or correspondence with John and Charles Wesley. The letter which Wesley wrote to Hervey in 1755 was not acknowledged. In a little more than a year afterwards, Wesley wrote to Hervey again. Tyerman thinks it probable that this second letter contained the substance of the former one. But it was not answered. It was, however, sent by Hervey to Ryland, the Baptist minister, on November 29, 1756, with the following letter: 'Herewith you have the grand attack from Mr. Wesley, of which I apprised you some time ago. Examine it closely; return it speedily; and, if you please, confute it effectually; demolish the battery, and spike up the cannon. I have not answered in any shape; and, when I do answer with my pen, I propose nothing more than a general acknowledgement, and an inquiry whether he proposes to print his animadversions.'

On Sunday evening, December 11, John Wesley retired to Lewisham. He spent the following days in finishing his well-known pamphlet entitled *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion*. He tells us it was designed for the use of all those who were under his care, but chiefly of the young

preachers. In *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, Tyerman gives a list of its contents. It was a collection of thirteen pamphlets, most of which had come from Wesley's own hand. Our attention is arrested by the title of the twelfth—'A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Hervey.'[1] It was the letter Wesley had written in 1756 to which he had received no answer. When Hervey saw the pamphlet, he wrote his reply in eleven letters, which contained his answer to Wesley's *Remarks on 'Theron and Aspasio.'* He submitted it for revision to Cudworth. In his letter to him, Hervey entreats him to get time for the revisal of all the pamphlet. He continues: 'If you could suggest or insert anything to make it edifying and useful, I should be glad. Would it not be proper to print Mr. Wesley's letter, and prefix it to my answer?' Tyerman says that Christian charity was nearly at zero between Wesley and Cudworth. It is probable that Cudworth took full advantage of the permission to 'revise' and 'insert,' but it is not possible to detect the result of his labours. When he had finished, Hervey began to make a fair copy of the work. By so doing he made himself responsible for the statements concerning Wesley that the letters contain.

As time went on, Hervey's strength ebbed away; his eagerness to vindicate himself abated. In December, 1758, his brother, William Hervey, was summoned to Weston Favell. James Hervey was dying. The evening before his death his brother asked him 'what he would have done with the letters to Mr. Wesley; whether he would have them published after his death' He answered, 'By no means,' giving for his reason that he had only transcribed about half of them fair for the press. He said further that as the corrections and alterations of the latter part were mostly in shorthand, it would be difficult to understand them, especially as some of the shorthand was entirely his own, and others could not make it out. As it was not a finished piece, he desired his brother not to think any more about it.[2] William Hervey for some time faithfully observed his brother's dying request. But in 1764 an unexpected event occurred. What Tyerman rightly calls 'a surreptitious edition' of the letters

[1] *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, ii. 320.
[2] Tyerman's *The Oxford Methodists*, 329.

was published. Its title was, '*"Aspasio" Vindicated, and the Scripture Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness Defended against the Objections and Animadversions of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley:* In eleven letters written and prepared for the Press, by the late Rev. Mr. J——s H——y, A.B.' This pamphlet was published without the printer's name. A brief preface, signed 'Philolethes,' was included, in which it is acknowledged that the work had 'found its way into the world, as it were, by stealth.' In 1765 William Hervey, disregarding his brother's wishes, published 'an authentic edition' of the *Letters*. In the preface he declares that the *Letters* never would have appeared had not the 'surreptitious' edition of them made its way from the press. In Henry Moore's *Life of John Wesley* we get a little more light on William Hervey's action. Some time after the publication of the 'authentic edition' William Hervey had an interview with Ebenezer Blackwell, his banker, who, for his plain honesty, was called in the City 'the rough diamond.' Hervey had been prosecuted and fined for taking more than the legal interest on £1,000 he had lent 'to an artful man.' Bemoaning his loss to Blackwell, that plain-speaking person said to him, 'Mr. Hervey, I will tell you the reason. You know your brother ordered you to destroy those letters against Mr. Wesley. But you thought they would be productive, and you published them. The business is now settled, and you may count your gains.'[1]

If the circulation of the *Eleven Letters* had been confined to England the book would have had only a transitory effect. But, unfortunately, the letters were reprinted in Edinburgh by Dr. John Erskine, one of the ministers of the old Greyfriars Church. The mischief produced was immediate. They appealed strongly to a people habituated to theological controversy, who stood staunchly by the teaching of Calvin. Wesley admits that the *Letters* had made 'a great deal of noise.' They did more. They created a feeling of antagonism to Wesley, his preachers, and his people, which hindered the progress of Methodism in Scotland for many years.

During Wesley's brief visit to Edinburgh he preached, on April 24, on the ground where the foundation of a new 'house' had been laid. A note in the *Standard Journal* informs us that 'the Octagon,' in the Low Calton, was the

[1] Moore's *Life of John Wesley*, ii. 248, *note*.

first Methodist property built in Edinburgh, and that it was sold to the city for street improvement when the chapel in Nicolson Square was built. In the autobiography of Thomas Taylor, in *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, we get a ray of light which falls on the condition of Methodism in Edinburgh at this time. He says, 'The Octagon was not quite finished, but the congregation was miserably small. Several things had concurred to reduce both the Society and congregation, particularly Mr. Hervey's *Letters*. I had soon the pleasure of seeing the congregation increase, yet not as I could wish, the place was never above half filled, even on Sunday evenings.'[1] Thomas Taylor's statement confirms our impression of the reason of the change in the character of the reception John Wesley received in Edinburgh during his visit to the city in 1765. But he did not lose heart. We notice that he makes no entry in his *Journal* on Friday, April 25; but we know he was busy with his pen. On that day he wrote the Preface to the first volume of his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, as we can see by its date—Edinburgh, April 25, 1765.[2] It is well to record the commencement of this project at a time when he might have suffered from depression.

On April 30 John Wesley reached Port Patrick on his way to Ireland. The voyage was a new departure. The opposite coast of Ireland was about twenty-two miles distant. Reaching Port Patrick in the afternoon, he and his companion, or companions, were immediately surrounded by boatmen offering to convey them over the water. 'But,' says Wesley, 'the wind was full in our teeth. I determined to wait till morning, and then go forward or backward, as God should please.' On May Day morning, as soon as the tide served, he said farewell to his friends, and went on board. He describes the vessel in which he sailed as 'an open boat,' and the imagination of those who have gone down to the sea in ships will be stirred by that description. We must content ourselves by saying that, notwithstanding the small size of the boat, it was large enough to contain its crew, with John Wesley and his mare. The sea was rough, and the voyage lasted for five hours and a half. Wesley was an old sailor; but the crossing told on him until he took refuge in sleep. When he arrived at Donaghadee he

[1] *Early Methodist Preachers*, v. 33. [2] See Wesley's *Works*, xiv. 260–268.

had to wait for five hours before his mare could land. Then he mounted her and rode to Newtownards.

John Wesley remained for three months in Ireland. He passed through his usual experience of light and shade, but the light prevailed. It is only necessary to dwell on a few incidents of his journeys through the country. On May 10, with Mr. Ryan as a companion, he set out for Londonderry. The arrangements for his journeys had been upset by his detention in England and Scotland, so he sometimes wondered as to where his home in a town would be. He had not been to Londonderry before, and he had no direction as to the person with whom he should stay. He was musing on the subject as he approached the town, and wishing that someone would meet him and challenge him. Suddenly a gentleman on horseback rode up to him, asked him his name, and showed him where the preacher lodged. In the afternoon this gentleman received him into his own house, where he found a pleasant home. In this way Alexander Knox, of Londonderry, comes into the scenes of Wesley's life, and into the circle of his friends.[1]

Wesley preached in the square, called the Linen Hall, on the Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday morning he went to church with Alexander Knox, who was a member of the Corporation. Mr. Knox led him to the mayor's pew, and the gentlemen already there made him sit above them. This sign of honour evoked from Wesley his usual remarks when he was treated with exceptional respect. We always read these remarks with the conviction that they are perfectly sincere; but also with the assurance that Wesley would never have said, with the hypocrite in the play, 'I like to be despised.' The mayor, Mr. William Kennedy, invited him to dinner. He there met his daughter, Miss Kennedy, who soon afterwards married Alexander Crookshank, the grandfather of the Rev. C. H. Crookshank, to whom we are so much indebted for information concerning Irish Methodism. In the evening Wesley preached again. He had a great congregation to hear him. He says: 'I think there was scarce one who did not feel that God was there. So general an impression upon a congregation I have hardly seen in any place.'

[1] He was the brother of Mr. Knox, of Sligo, who was known to Wesley, and was for some time a Methodist. Alexander Knox became a Methodist. His son is not likely to be forgotten by those who have read his defence of John Wesley against the misapprehensions of Robert Southey.

John Wesley prolonged his visit to Londonderry until May 27. Apart from his work in the Society, he filled up his time in writing letters and his *Notes on the Old Testament.* But one incident which happened to him—we presume in the pleasant home of Alexander Knox—arrests our attention. In *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* we mentioned the beginning of his serious study of the Nonconformist position.[1] Since the early days of April, 1754, he had made steady advance towards a more charitable view of men who differed from him in his convictions concerning separation from the Church of England. When he was in Londonderry in 1765, he got sudden light on a problem he had not completely solved. We think it is undeniable that, in the Epworth parsonage, little was said about the Nonconformist ancestors of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. The children were trained to revere the Episcopal Church, and they became enthusiasts for its ceremonies and history. In the sense in which the term was used in the eighteenth century they belonged to the ' High Church ' party. The boys went out into the world firm in the convictions which had been created in them by the example and teaching of their father and mother. As time went on, John Wesley's outlook acquired a wider range. As he advanced in understanding he increased in charity and in the power to see both sides of disputed questions. It was during this advance that he visited Londonderry, and a book was placed in his hands which he read with surprise and deep content. He was acquainted with Calamy's *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life* and with his *Account of the Ministers Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in* 1660. In the latter book Dr. Annesley, the father of Mrs. Samuel Wesley, is mentioned, and a short notice of his life and work is given. Among the Dorset ministers the name of ' Mr. Westley, Senior,' appears as being ' ejected ' from Charmouth. In 1727, however, Calamy published a *Continuation of the Account* in two volumes ; and in one of them there is a full notice of John Westley, the father of Samuel Wesley. In that notice there is included a dialogue between John Westley and Dr. Gilbert Ironside, the Bishop of Bristol. The dialogue appears at length in John Wesley's *Journal,* v., 120–124. It is no wonder he read it with interest ; we can understand his prefatory apology, ' I may be

[1] See pp. 234–235.

excused if it appears more remarkable to me than it will do to an unconcerned person.' He became absorbed in Calamy's report of this conversation, every line of which is still interesting. He would see that his grandfather had marked out a path he himself, and his preachers, were following. We can only indicate a few points he must have pondered. His grandfather had joined a Nonconformist Church in Melcomb Regis,[1] and by that church he had been sent out to preach. The mention of the 'Church' caused the bishop to cry out, 'That factious and heretical Church.' After this outburst the question arose concerning 'the manner' in which the Church had sent out Westley to preach. The bishop insisted that if Westley preached, it must be according to order—the order of the Church of England upon ordination. When Westley was asked, 'What mission had you to preach?' he answered, 'I had a mission from God and man'; and the bishop again declared that he must have it 'according to law, and the order of the Church of England.' The discussion then proceeded to the subject of 'the gathered Church' to which Westley belonged. The bishop declared: 'We must have no "gathered churches" in England, and you will see it so; for there must be a unity without divisions among us, and there can be no unity without uniformity.'

When the subject of ordination was exhausted the conversation took another course. In speaking of the results of his preaching which he considered its justification, Westley said: 'It pleased God to seal my labour with success, in the apparent conversion of many souls.' At this point the bishop's patience failed. The word 'conversion' annoyed him. He cried: 'Yea, that is, it may be, to your own way.' Westley's reply was such as his grandson and his preachers might have given: 'Yea, to the power of godliness, from ignorance and profaneness. If it please your lordship to lay down any evidences of godliness agreeing with Scripture, and that are not found in those persons intended, I am content to be discharged the ministry. I will stand or fall on the issue thereof.' The conversation then reverted to Westley's authority to preach. He told the bishop that when the Church saw the presence of God going along with him they did, by fasting and prayer, in a day set apart for that end, seek an abundant blessing on his

[1] Now a part of Weymouth.

endeavours. As the conference drew to a close the bishop seemed to be impressed with the strength of Westley's convictions and reasoning. He looked at the young man, who was only twenty-five years of age, and asked him if he would stand to his principles. He replied: 'I intend it, through the grace of God, and to be faithful to the King's Majesty, however you deal with me.' The bishop said 'I will not meddle with you.' Then they took their leave. Westley said 'Farewell to you, sir'; and the bishop replied, 'Farewell, good Mr. Westley.'

# XIII

## A MANCHESTER CONFERENCE

On May 27, 1765, John Wesley left Londonderry. He had spent more than a fortnight in the pleasant home of Mr. Knox; in after-years he often returned there. He was much interested in the boy of the family. Wesley was a great favourite with children. When he entered a house where he was well known, the children ran to greet him; they 'pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's smile.' We are able to ascertain the impression made by him on the son of the house who recorded it after an acquaintance of many years. He says:

During the period of my occasional intercourse with Mr. Wesley, I passed from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood; not without some material changes in my mind and habits. At an early age I was a member of Mr. Wesley's Society, but my connexion with it was not of long duration. Having a growing disposition to think for myself, I could not adopt the opinions which were current among his followers; and before I was twenty years of age my relish for their religious practices had abated. Still, my veneration for Mr. Wesley himself suffered no diminution; rather, as I became more capable of estimating him without prejudice, my conviction of his excellence, and my attachment to his goodness, gained fresh strength and deeper cordiality.

It will hardly be denied that, even in this frail and corrupted world, we sometimes meet persons who, in their very mien and aspect, as well as in the whole habit of life, manifest such a stamp and signature of virtue as to make our judgement of them a matter of intuition, rather than a result of continual examination. I never met a human being who came more perfectly within this description than John Wesley. It was impossible to converse with him—I might say, to look at him—without being persuaded, not only that his heart and mind were animated with the purest and most exalted goodness, but that the instinctive bent of his nature accorded so congenially with his Christian principles as to give a pledge for his practical consistency in which it was impossible not to place confidence.

It would be far too little to say that it was impossible to suspect him of any moral taint; for it was obvious that every movement bespoke as perfect a contrariety to all that was earthly or animal as could be imagined in a mortal being. His countenance, as well as conversation, expressed an habitual gaiety of heart, which nothing but conscious virtue and innocence could have bestowed. He was, in truth, the most perfect specimen of moral happiness which I ever saw; and my acquaintance with him has done more to teach me what a heaven upon earth is implied in the maturity of Christian piety, than all I have elsewhere seen, or heard, or read, except in the sacred volume.

This description was written in October, 1825, by Alexander Knox, whose disposition 'to think for himself' continued to grow to the end of his days. He had read Southey's *Life of John Wesley*, a book he highly valued. But he thought that certain statements respecting Wesley's moral and religious character which the book contains needed reconsideration. Southey subsequently expressed a wish that Alexander Knox should offer such remarks as had occurred to him in reading the *Life of John Wesley*. In reply, Knox wrote another letter in which, while he stringently criticizes several of Wesley's ecclesiastical acts, he maintains the view of his personal character expressed in the letter from which we have taken the foregoing paragraphs.[1]

Wesley left Londonderry and made his way to the west. At Galway he had a rough reception when he preached in the Exchange. After being allowed to preach for 'a full quarter of an hour' the mob began to roar and he was obliged to end the service. He walked through the crowd and returned quietly to his lodgings. He says: 'A large retinue attended me to the door; but it was only to gape and stare; none taking the pains either to lift up a hand, or to say anything bad or good.' The next day, June 6, he was accompanied by Lieutenant Cook on his journey, and had a long talk with him. He had been in all the actions at Fort William Henry, Louisbourg, and Quebec, and he gave Wesley a more distinct account of them than he had ever heard before. Again his eyes were turned towards America, and his mind was filled with the scenes of battle-fields, and the stories of defeats and victories. The lieutenant had passed through fights against Indians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards, and had not received a wound.

[1] For Knox's two letters, see Maurice H. Fitzgerald's edition of Southey's *Life of Wesley*, published in 1925, by the Oxford University Press, pp. 338–372.

In retreating and advancing he had been under the hottest fire. As we listen to the voices of the riders on their way to Ennis, we wonder if John Wesley's thoughts wandered across the Atlantic. Did he think of Philip Embury and the other Methodists who had gone to New York? We have no evidence which proves that he had received precise information concerning them since they sailed from Limerick.

On Saturday, June 8, John Wesley reached Limerick, and found the preaching-house just finished. He was delighted with it. It was 'neat, yea elegant, yet not gaudy.' In his record of this visit to Limerick and its neighbourhood there are constant entries which reveal his gladness. There is one exception. On Friday, June 14, about noon, he preached at Ballingarrane 'to the small remains of the poor Palatines.' Once more we hear his note of sadness. 'As they could not get food and raiment here, with all their diligence and frugality, part are scattered up and down the Kingdom, and part gone to America. I stand amazed! Have landlords no common sense (whether they have common humanity or no), that they will suffer such tenants as these to be starved away from them?' It is clear that John Wesley did not see 'the bow in the cloud' that day. If he had known what was to take place that year in Terryhoogan, a village near Portadown, in the county of Armagh, in Ulster, his sorrow at the westward drift of Methodists towards America would have been increased. Terryhoogan was, according to Wesley, 'the Mother-Church' of the Methodist Societies in its neighbourhood. In 1765 one of its most successful workers sailed for America. A high authority has testified that 'the savour of his name was cherished as long as the generation who had known him lived.' He too had yielded to 'the call of the West' and had left Ireland. We shall meet Robert Strawbridge again at another stage of our history.

In thinking of the emigration of the Irish Methodists to America, we are apt to forget that it was part of a great movement that was depopulating several parts of Ireland at that time. We have our special reasons for keeping our eyes fixed on Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge; but we must not lose sight of facts which must be considered. About the year 1758 or 1759 the rage of emigration to America was prevalent in Ireland. Dr. Adam Clarke is an authority on this subject.

He mentions the heavy taxation and the landlord oppression which drove many people out of Ireland. In addition, he speaks of the appeals that came from America, which produced an immediate effect on many Irishmen. He says, 'America, thin in her population and extensive in her territory, held out promises of easily acquired property, immense gains by commerce, and lures of every description, to induce the ill-provided-for and dissatisfied inhabitants of the mother-country to carry their persons and property thither, that by their activity and industry they might enrich this rising and even then ambitious state. . . . At that time, and for many years after, this rage for emigration was so great that many young men, women, and whole families, artificers and husbandmen, who were not able to defray the expenses of their own passage, were encouraged by the shipowners to embark . . . the captain having the privilege of selling them for five or seven years to the transatlantic planters, to repay the expenses of their passage and maintenance!'[1] It is easy to detect a tone of sharpness in this statement. It must be remembered that Dr. Adam Clarke's father, with the expectation, if not the promise, of a professorship in one of the projected universities in America, had sold his property, and with his wife and an infant son had gone to the port and city of Londonderry, and had taken a passage for America in one of the merchant transport vessels which were then so numerous. He and his family were on the eve of sailing when his father arrived from the country. He went on board and expostulated with his son. He persuaded him to change his purpose, and to forfeit his passage money. The effect of this abandonment of his intention was 'nearly ruinous to the family and its prospects.' We must remember that fact; but it does not affect the question of the largeness of the emigration from Ireland to America, not only of Palatines but of Irishmen, at the time we have reached.

John Wesley remained in Ireland until the beginning of August. He was much encouraged by his visits to Cork, Athlone, and Dublin; and he gives us pleasant descriptions of the progress of the Societies in these places. On August 2 he and his companions went on board the *Felicity* bound for Whitehaven. The voyage lasted four days. On Friday

[1] *An Account of the Life of Adam Clarke*, 13, 14.

August 16, he rode to Chester from Manchester, and preached in the new Octagon 'House' that had been opened in June. He stayed in Chester until the following Monday in the house of an old friend. Francis Gilbert had left Kendal and settled for a time with his little 'family,' in the city. The next year, when Wesley visited Chester, his home once more was with Francis Gilbert.[1]

On Monday, August 19, after preaching at Northwich, Wesley got back to Manchester and preached there in the evening. The next day he held a Conference in Manchester, which demands special attention. The Conference was held in the preaching-house in Birchin Lane, to which the Methodists had removed, in 1750, from their small and inconvenient 'Room.'[2] Before noting the business transacted at the first Manchester Conference we must express our relief at the publication of a little pamphlet of twelve pages, sold at the price of one penny. In it the most important acts of the Conference are recorded. This was a new departure. Until the *Penny Minutes* were published the Conference was considered to be, in most respects, a private assembly. The publication of two editions of the *Large Minutes* was a great step in advance; but so far as we know, their circulation was comparatively small. The coming of the *Penny Minutes*, published annually, inaugurated a new era. They are especially welcome to writers who have to describe the growth of the Methodist constitution. After 1765 'the explorer of avenues' proceeds with a more confident step.

In the *Minutes* of the Manchester Conference we find several entries which throw light on the condition of Methodism at the time we have now reached. We find there were thirty-nine circuits in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. There were twenty-five preachers who acted as Wesley's Assistants, and sixty-nine other 'travelling preachers,' twelve of whom were admitted 'on trial' in 1765. We do not see in the list the name of any 'local preacher,' that is, of a man who served Wesley 'in one place.' The names of John and Charles Wesley do not appear on the 'stations.' Those who are acquainted with Myles's list of the 'First Race of Methodist Preachers,' which

[1] See Bretherton's *Early Methodism in and around Chester*, 72.

[2] The preaching-house in Birchin Lane was used by the Methodists for thirty years. On Friday, March 30, 1781, John Wesley opened its successor, the chapel in Oldham Street. Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, iii. 350.

appears at the close of his *Chronological History*, will remember that it contains the names of men who helped Wesley during the period from 1739 to 1765. When we compare the 'stations' of the latter year with Myles's list we see the changes that had taken place; many of the early preachers had 'retired from the work,' but the 'stations' of the Manchester Conference are bright with the names of men who were faithful to Wesley and to Methodism unto death.

The business transacted by the Manchester Conference was important, but we can only refer to a few matters that require special attention. We are impressed by the fact that the Conference faced a question that reminds us of the letters which Charles Wesley wrote to some of the preachers at the time of the Norwich sacramental controversy.[1] There can be no doubt that, when a Methodist preacher was laid aside from 'active work' at that time, in many cases he had to face the discomforts of a life of poverty. The matter had engaged close attention, and it had been decided to raise a fund to assist those preachers who were 'so entirely worn out that they cannot preach at all.' The fund was to be named 'The Preachers' Fund,' the title being expanded at a later stage of its history. The rules of the Fund, recorded in the *Minutes* of 1765, are as follows:

1. Let every Travelling Preacher contribute half a guinea yearly at the Conference.
2. Let this, till it can be safely placed out, be lodged in the hands of three Stewards, approved of by the majority of the Preachers.
3. The present Stewards are Samuel Franks, at *London*; William Hey, at *Leeds*; John Hosmer, at *Sunderland*.
4. Every one, when he is received as a Travelling Preacher, is to pay one guinea.
5. This Fund is never to be reduced to less than a hundred pounds.
6. Out of this are to be supplied superannuated Travelling Preachers, and when they die, their widows and children.
7. Every superannuated Preacher shall receive, at least, ten pounds a year.
8. Every widow of such a Preacher shall receive, once for all, a sum not exceeding forty pounds.
9. Every child left by such a Preacher, shall receive, once for all, a sum not usually exceeding ten pounds: but this cannot be claimed by any child whose mother has received forty pounds.
10. None is entitled to anything from this Fund till he has subscribed two guineas.

[1] See pp. 72-75.

11. Nor any person, from the time he ceases (unless superannuated) to be a Travelling Preacher.

12. Nor any who neglects paying his subscription for four years.

13. But whoever is excluded shall have the money he has subscribed returned.

14. Let an exact account of all receipts and disbursements be produced at the yearly Conference, by Francis Gilbert, Secretary.

Those who have studied the remarkable history of the origin and growth of Methodist finance will be interested in these 'rules.' In them they will see suggestions that have influenced future legislation. It will be seen that, at first, the fund was maintained solely by the contributions of the preachers, and that the money was placed in the hands of lay stewards. Samuel Franks was John Wesley's book-keeper in London; William Hey was a physician in Leeds; John Hosmer was a doctor in Sunderland. Francis Gilbert, the secretary, was a layman who had recently settled in Chester. This arrangement was soon changed. At the Conference of 1767 Joseph Cownley and John Murlin, lay preachers, were appointed stewards for the fund; and a committee consisting of twelve preachers was chosen to assist them in its management.[1]

It is necessary to indicate another subject that was again seriously considered at this Conference. It was found that the number of preaching-houses was being rapidly increased; and that, in many cases, heavy debts for their erection were being incurred. We do not wonder at this building activity. So long as the fierce opposition of the clergy and of the members of the Established Church continued, an influence was at work which made the Methodist people, in towns and villages, seek to find places in which they could worship in peace. In cities, and in some of the large towns, preaching-houses were being erected in which congregations gathered undisturbed by the attacks of mobs. It is no wonder that the news of this immunity from assault spread through the country and excited the longing of the Methodists for the advantages possessed by the more fortunate Societies. But the poverty that prevailed in some of the smaller towns and villages must be considered; also it must be remembered that, in the end, much of the burden of the debts incurred came to rest on John Wesley and the Conference. At Manchester the question had to be faced. It

[1] See *Minutes of Conference*, i. 73.

appears in this form : ' We are still overrun with debt : what can be done ? ' This was the answer : ' Let no preaching-house anywhere be begun, but by the advice of the assistant. And let no assistant consent thereto without an absolute necessity.' The position of an ' assistant ' in a circuit was honourable. He was the representative of John Wesley, and acted for him. But the decision of the Conference seriously increased his responsibility. It made the load, in many cases, almost intolerable. In 1765 it was not easy to stop the rush of the enthusiasts for preaching-house building ; the assistants who attempted to do so probably suffered a loss of popularity. But the necessity for prudent advance was unquestionable, and the price of insisting on it had to be paid.

Another question relating to the preaching-houses was asked and answered at the Manchester Conference. It related to their legal settlement. The question was : ' Are the houses already built safe ? ' The answer showed that some of them were not yet ' regularly settled,' and that ' several trustees for others were dead.' The Conference decided that to remedy these defects ' a person should be sent through England, to survey the deeds, and supply the trustees wanting.' Here was another unenviable task! But no one who has examined the trust deeds of ancient Methodist preaching-houses will deny that it was imperative that it should be attempted. Evidence of that fact will be within the knowledge of those who are acquainted with some of the deeds of Methodist ' preaching-houses ' erected in the eighteenth century.

Among the new departures at this Conference we notice that an attempt was made to prevent ' our people needlessly removing from one Society to another.' It was decided that none should remove without the advice of the assistant, and that none should be received in another Society without a certificate from the assistant, in these words : ' A.B., the bearer, is now a member of our Society in —— I believe *he* has a sufficient cause to remove from hence.' In addition, it was resolved that the tickets of membership should be of one form everywhere. The proceedings of the Manchester Conference are full of interest. After 1765 no Conference was held there until 1787. We think that the fact suggests that Wesley had discovered that the ' model deed ' on which many of the preaching-houses were being settled did not recognize

Manchester as one of the towns in which the Conference could appoint preachers to chapels. However, in 1784, the 'Deed of Declaration' gave the Conference power to appoint 'the place of holding the yearly assembly, at any other city, town, or place than London, Bristol, or Leeds, when it shall seem expedient so to do,' and had also secured the right of appointing ministers to all chapels; so great difficulties were removed out of the way of the Conference.[1]

On August 28 John Wesley arrived in Bristol on his way to Cornwall. He rested in Bristol for three or four days. We think that it was on this visit that he and his brother had a conversation on the important question of the admission of members to the Society. We have seen the Bristol Society-Book which was prepared for the entry of the names of those who were admitted as members, which bears the dates 1765–1786. On the fly-leaf, evidently in Charles Wesley's handwriting, the following record appears:

It is proposed: 1st. That all persons who shall be admitted into this Society shall have their names entered in this book. 2nd. That no persons shall be admitted without the recommendation of some member of the Society who is acquainted with their character, having first met in class (at least three times), read over and considered the Rules of the Society. 3rd. That at the expiration of three months, if no objection is made to their character, they shall be received as regular members of the Society, and their names entered in the register. As we have often seen the bad consequences of too hastily admitting persons into Society it is requested of the resident preacher punctually to observe these Rules.

*Bristol, September* 10, 1765.

That John Wesley approved of these proposals is clear, for the names of the members are often entered in his handwriting. Columns are ruled for the name, occupation, and residence of the members, for the classes in which they meet, and for the names of the persons who have recommended them for membership. It will be seen that the Wesleys were convinced that admission into membership was an act that required careful consideration, and that it entailed responsibility, not only on the persons admitted, but also upon those who, in a sense, were sureties for their good behaviour. These regulations, in places where they were observed, did much to secure

[1] See *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline*, 376, 379, fifth edition.

the stability of the Societies. They ceased to be ' a fortuitous concourse of atoms ' ; they became a well-organized and disciplined section of the Methodist Society.[1]

On Monday, September 2, John Wesley set out from Bristol for Cornwall. The next day he preached in the evening at Tiverton to a large and quiet audience. Then on Wednesday he rode to North Tawton, a small town in Devon which several of his preachers had occasionally visited. He was probably expecting another quiet service, but in this he was disappointed. Let us see what occurred. He took his stand at the door of his inn, and he shall describe what happened.

> I had hardly ended the psalm, when a clergyman came, with two or three (by the courtesy of England called) gentlemen. After I had named my text I said, ' There may be some truths which concern some men only ; but this concerns all mankind.' The minister cried out, ' That is false doctrine, that is predestination.' Then the roar began, to second which they had brought an huntsman with his hounds. But the dogs were wiser than the men ; for they could not bring them to make any noise at all. One of the gentlemen supplied their place. He assured us he was such, or none would have suspected it ; for his language was as base, foul, and porterly, as ever was heard at Billingsgate. Dog, rascal, puppy, and like terms adorned almost every sentence. Finding there was no probability of a quiet hearing, I left him the field, and withdrew to my lodging.

When John Wesley reached Cornwall he experienced another interruption. It occurred at Redruth. On Monday, September 16, he took his stand at six o'clock in the evening on the market-house steps, as had been his custom. The congregation was very large. But he had not finished the hymn when a man came and read the Act against riots. The editor of Wesley's *Journal* thinks it probable that the interrupter was the Rev. John Collins, the minister of Redruth. When the Act was read Wesley said, ' Mr. C., I did not expect this from you ; I really thought you had more understanding.' The rebuke reduced him to silence. Wesley moved away from the steps and quietly finished his discourse. The two men had known each other at Oxford, and Wesley had heard the clergyman preach sermons that had given him great satisfaction. We mention these cases to show that, while the persecution of the lay preachers continued, Wesley was not

[1] See Simon's *Manual for Class-Leaders*, 66–69.

immune from attack. He still shared their experience of rough usage.

On September 21 John Wesley arrived in Bristol. On the following Saturday he preached in Bath. In his notice of the service he says, 'I had only the poor to hear, there being service at the same time in Lady Huntingdon's chapel. So I was just in my element. I have scarce ever found such liberty in Bath before.' His reference to the chapel arrests us. In 1765 Lady Huntingdon bought a piece of ground in 'the vineyards' at Bath, and a chapel was built on it that occupies a conspicuous place in the religious history of that city. An incident in connexion with its erection calls for special record. Lady Huntingdon was well known at Bath, and services had been conducted there at which many society people had been present. But during the time when the chapel was being built she does not seem to have visited the city. She was busy elsewhere. Lord Chesterfield had been present in some of her London preaching assemblies, and had been interested in the dramatic oratory of George Whitefield. His wife was deeply influenced by the truths he proclaimed. She became, in the highest sense of the word, a Christian. Seeing that Lady Huntingdon was not going to Bath, where she was accustomed to meet a large company of evangelical clergy, Lord Chesterfield offered her the use of his house and chapel at Bretby Hall in Derbyshire. She arrived there towards the close of July, and three evangelical clergy soon joined her. The clergymen preached alternately in the Hall chapel. Then Whitefield arrived; and, as the chapel could not contain the crowd, he went into the Park and rejoiced to be once again 'a field preacher.' The incident puts Lord Chesterfield in a light in which we are not accustomed to view him. As the chapel at Bath was not 'dedicated to God and preaching of His everlasting gospel' until October 6, 1765, we presume that the service to which Wesley refers was preparatory to the 'opening' service, at which Whitefield preached in the morning, and the rector of Pewsey, the son of Alderman Townsend, of London, in the evening.

On October 24 John Wesley got back to London. Four days afterwards he had breakfast with George Whitefield. He was much touched by the signs of failing health which were apparent in his old friend. He says that Whitefield seemed to

be 'an old, old man, being fairly worn out in his Master's service; he has hardly seen fifty years.' He was moved to make a quiet comparison, which suggests that the optimist was strong in him. He says, 'And yet it pleases God that I, who am now in my sixty-third year, find no disorder, no weakness, no decay, no difference from what I was at five-and-twenty, only that I have fewer teeth and more grey hairs.' It was not long before he had to revise this estimate of his physical condition.

During the first week of December John Wesley visited Canterbury, Dover, Sandwich, Margate, and Faversham. At Margate he found a few people gathered into a Methodist Society; but he says, 'the minister of the parish earnestly opposes them, and thinks he is doing God service.' At Faversham he found a more serious form of persecution. When he got there he was at once informed that the mob and the magistrates had agreed together to drive Methodism out of the town. But John Wesley had learned lessons which had modified his opinions on the subject of non-resistance. He preached, and, after the service, he told the congregation what the Methodists had been constrained to do in consequence of the action of the magistrate at Rolvenden. He had been proceeded against, and Wesley announced the sobering fact that the magistrate 'would have been richer by some hundred pounds had he never meddled with the Methodists.' He concluded with an announcement that shows he was moving from the position he had once occupied. He said, 'Since we have both God and the law on our side, if we can have peace by fair means, we had much rather; we should be exceeding glad; but if not, we *will* have peace.'

Wesley returned to London, and on Thursday, December 12, we find an entry in his *Journal* which is of exceptional interest. The record is brief, and does not seem to challenge special attention. He tells us that he rode over to Leytonstone, and 'found one truly Christian family.' But we must remember that he often used the word 'family' in a special sense. As we glance at the word, our thoughts fly off to Nicholas Ferrar and that restful home at Little Gidding, near Huntingdon. We think also of John Wesley and 'the family' in the Savannah parsonage; we remember his hope that Kingswood School would contain 'a truly Christian family.' At Leytonstone he

found Miss Mary Bosanquet surrounded by a group of children who were being excellently trained by her. He had a talk with the children, one by one, and to his deep content he found that his ideal ' family ' had been realized. He does not mention Miss Bosanquet on this occasion ; but we shall have to refer to her again. She occupies a conspicuous place in the host of eighteenth-century Methodist women.

On Sunday, December 15, Wesley was in Shoreham. His friend Vincent Perronet had lost his son Henry, and had asked him to bury him. He complied with the request and returned to London. Then, on the following Wednesday, he determined to stay for a few days with Vincent Perronet that he might comfort him in his trouble. So he mounted his mare and rode through the streets. He crossed London Bridge, a place he had cause to remember. He may have thought of his accident in the slippery weather of February, 1751, after which he was nursed by Mrs. Vazeille. But he rode into the Borough. Then, without warning, his mare's feet flew up and she fell with his leg under her. It was a serious crash. He was bruised on his right arm, his breast, his knee, leg, and ankle, ' which swelled exceedingly.' He was helped into a shop, and rested there a few minutes. But he had promised to go to Shoreham, and he could not disappoint his friend. So a coach was called and he continued his journey. Resting in Shoreham he recovered enough strength to enable him to walk a little on plain ground. His reward was that by his visit Vincent Perronet was ' comforted over all his trouble.' He left Shoreham on the Saturday, returning to London in a chariot. Sunday was a trying day. He feared that he would not be able to go through the service at West Street ; but help came to him as on a former occasion. He says, ' Mr. Greaves, being just ordained, came straight to the chapel, and gave me the assistance I wanted.' The effects of his accident continued for a long time ; he feared he should never be free from them. In the New Year we notice that, while he often rode a horse, he was obliged to take some of his longer journeys in a chaise.

## XIV

## FAINT YET PURSUING

THE opening months of 1766 were filled with work. John Wesley not only cared for the Society in London, but in January he visited Bury St. Edmunds, Yarmouth, and Colchester. He felt the lack of the assistance of his brother, and wrote to him pleading with him to bestir himself and come to his help. His appeal was in vain. The time had arrived when John Wesley began to see that he must bear the whole burden of responsibility for the oversight and management of the Methodist Societies outside Bristol. He had to face two pressing difficulties in London. In February he spent five days in writing the 'catalogue' of the Society. It was a painful task. He found that the Society in London had been reduced from 2,800 to 2,200 members. In recording the fact he says: 'Such is the fruit of George Bell's enthusiasm and Thomas Maxfield's gratitude!' His appeals to his brother suggest that he was conscious that his own prolonged absence from London hindered the advance of the Society and the removal of obstacles that prevented its safe progress. His presence was a great inspiration; it rallied discouraged people; it roused them to attempt seemingly impossible tasks. In illustration of that fact we may say that a debt of £610 weighed on the Society. On January 28 a meeting was held to consider 'temporal affairs.' Other meetings followed; and on March 6 more than the whole debt had been subscribed.

On March 8 John Wesley went to Bristol by 'the machine.' There he met with another difficulty. Kingswood School was in an unsatisfactory state. We have noted that he had a lofty ideal of the school in respect of its religious character. But again and again he was disappointed. On March 12 he rode to Kingswood to ascertain its actual condition. We can read much in the sentence: 'I will have one or the other—a Christian school or none at all.' Six days later we find

him at Evesham, where he preached about six o'clock 'with tolerable quiet.' But as he returned from the service a rude and noisy mob surrounded him. The mob was encouraged by 'a wretched magistrate.' But as Wesley and his companion, Duncan Wright, were not saluted with stones or dirt, they were well contented. The next day Wesley preached at Birmingham in the evening. Here again a mob assembled; but 'they were restrained' till he had concluded his sermon. In pleasant contrast with these 'mob' incidents we note that on March 20, when Wesley preached in the new 'House' at Nottingham, it was 'thoroughly filled with serious hearers.' He declares that in Nottingham there was never any disturbance. For twenty-four years the Methodists had conducted the services, for the most part, in private houses. In 1766 the Tabernacle, near Boot Lane, was erected.[1] On the following Sunday Wesley intended to preach in the market place, but snow had fallen in the night and made preaching there impracticable. So he preached twice in the Tabernacle. In the morning it contained the congregation, but in the evening many were constrained to go away. Wesley recalled these quiet services in Nottingham, and contrasted them with those in mob-ruled towns. He says, there could be no disturbances anywhere 'if the magistrates were lovers of peace, and exerted themselves in the defence of it.'

On March 27 Wesley preached in the morning at 'a little village near Eyam,' in the High Peak of Derbyshire.[2] He tells us that the eagerness with which the poor people devoured the word made amends for the cold ride over the snowy mountains. The mention of Eyam is arresting. Mr. Croston, in his book entitled *On Foot through the Peak*, says that it is 'a pretty-looking little mountain village, consisting of one long, straggling lane or street, with dwellings of somewhat primitive aspect bordering either side, and a few groups of cottages, with a scattered homestead or two perched picturesquely upon the summit and upon pleasant ledges of the mountain slope, whilst, prominent over all, the pinnacled towers of its ancient church is seen peeping above the spreading limes that encircle it.' That is a bright sketch of Eyam as

[1] It was another octagon building, and stood near the present Octagon Place. See Wesley's *Journal*, v. 160, *note*.

[2] The Rev. Marmaduke Riggall thinks it probable that Wesley preached at Grindleford, which is about two miles from Eyam. See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vi. 35.

it appeared during the closing years of the last century. But no one who is acquainted with its history will be content to see it only in the light of modern days. The attention of the antiquary will be fixed on the ancient cross which stands in the churchyard. We share his enthusiasm when we see that it is undoubtedly a monument of those great times when the Christian religion was beginning to spread in England. Our interest in this cross is deepened when we learn that many years ago a traveller in the Peak caught sight of it when it was lying 'prostrate and half concealed' by the wayside, a derelict in the village. The traveller was a man still well known for his care of prisoners. Through his influence, the cross was released from its bondage. Once more it was set upright, freed from its burden of weeds. Mr. John Leyland, in his book on *The Peak of Derbyshire: Its Scenery and Antiquities*, says that its rescuer was John Howard, the great philanthropist.[1]

The story of the ravages of the 'Great Plague' in Eyam is well known to those who are acquainted with seventeenth-century history. The plague had devastated London. It commenced its attack towards the end of the month of November, 1664; then, with the return of summer, it put forth its full terrific force. During the six months of its continuance a hundred thousand Londoners died. In July, 1665, the plague broke out in Eyam. The population of the village then amounted to about three hundred and fifty; but the plague swept away two hundred and fifty-nine grown-up people and fifty-eight children. It is a gloomy story which Mr. Croston tells; but the light often touches it. It is well known that in London many of the clergy abandoned their churches and fled into the country. But in Eyam there was a man of a different spirit. To this day his name is mentioned with reverence. William Mompesson would not quit his people. He did not stand alone. He urged his wife to leave the village with her two children. She was then in her twenty-seventh year. But his persuasions were in vain. She consented to the removal of her children to a place of safety, but she determined to stand by her husband until death did them part. The plague struck her, and she died.

The plague continued throughout the winter; when the summer of 1666 came it did its work with increased virulence.

[1] See p. 103.

When it broke out, Mompesson, thinking of the danger of the people in the neighbourhood, persuaded the inhabitants of Eyam to stay in their own village. They consented and quietly accepted their doom. They were not allowed to go beyond certain specified boundaries. At this point the Earl of Devonshire comes into view. He would not leave Chatsworth. Daring all danger, he organized the supply of food for the Eyam people, and did noble service in this time of peril and distress. When the summer came, and the plague began to rage, Mompesson, seeing the danger arising out of the assembling of the people in the church, commenced to preach to his fast-diminishing congregation in the open air. He gathered them together in the Delf, a narrow, romantic dell lying between the village and Middleton Dale. The place where he held his services during the time when the church was closed is well known. In it may still be found 'Cucklet Church' and 'Pulpit Rock.'

In Eyam at that time there lived a well-known minister, Thomas Stanley. In 1644 he became the Rector of Eyam. He continued in the office until 'St. Bartholomew's Day,' 1662, when he went out with the men who could not consent to the conditions of the Act of Uniformity. But he remained in the village, and was there during the raging of the plague. Calamy says: 'When he could not serve his people publickly, he was helpful to them in private, especially when the pestilence prevailed.' He officiated amongst them with great tenderness and affection during that sore and mortal visitation. He manfully supported Mompesson, who highly valued his services. It is strange that during this time of anxiety some persons objected to his presence in the village. They appealed to the Earl of Devonshire, the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, who made them this memorable reply: 'It was more reasonable that the whole country should in more than words testify their thankfulness to him, who, together with his care of the town, had taken such care, as none else did, to prevent the infection of the towns adjacent.'[1] Thomas Stanley died in 1670. Those who visit the Eyam Church at the present time will be interested to know that its north aisle was in after-years rebuilt as a memorial to William Mompesson and Thomas Stanley.[2]

[1] Calamy's *Account of Ministers Ejected or Silenced*, ii. 180.
[2] *The Peak Country*, by A. R. Hope Moncrieff, 114.

We have said that during this terrible time of plague many of the London clergy withdrew from their churches, and that some Nonconformist ministers cared for the forsaken congregations. During the plague the Parliament met in Oxford. In its sessions it is difficult to find men possessing the spirit of the Earl of Devonshire. John Richard Green shall describe to us part of its proceedings:

> When the clergy fled from London at the appearance of the plague, their pulpits were boldly occupied, in open defiance of the law, by the ministers who had been ejected from them. The terror and hatred roused by this revival of a foe that seemed to have been crushed was seen in the Five Mile Act, which completed in 1665 the code of persecution. By its provisions every clergyman who had been driven out by the Act of Uniformity was called on to swear that he held it unlawful under any pretext to take up arms against the King, and that he would at no time 'endeavour any alteration of government in Church or State.' In case of refusal, he was forbidden to go within five miles of any borough or of any place where he had been wont to minister. As the main body of the Nonconformists belonged to the city and trading classes, the effect of this measure was to rob them of any religious teaching at all. But the tide of religious intolerance was now slowly ebbing, and, bigoted as the House was, a motion to impose the oath of the Five Mile Act on every person in the nation was rejected in the same session by a majority of six. The sufferings of the Nonconformists, indeed, could hardly fail to tell on the sympathies of the people. The thirst for revenge which had been roused by the tyranny of the Presbyterians in their hour of triumph was satisfied by their humiliation in their hour of defeat. The sight of pious and learned clergymen driven from their homes and their flocks, of religious meetings broken up by the constables, of preachers set side by side with thieves and outcasts in the dock, of jails crammed with honest enthusiasts whose piety was their only crime, pleaded more eloquently for toleration than all the reasoning in the world.[1]

This description of the Five Mile Act might be amplified; but we welcome it because of its restraint. In addition, it re-creates the circumstances of the time when John Wesley's grandfather became a wanderer, being driven out of the little village of Preston, in Dorset, to which, after years of toil and persecution, he returned to die.[2] John Wesley's knowledge of his family history was increasing, and his ride over the Derbyshire hills in 1766, just one hundred years after the passing of the Five Mile Act, may have wakened slumbering thoughts.

[1] Green's *History of the English People*, iii. 375–376.
[2] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 37-38.

It is not improbable that in his visits to the villages of the Peak he heard the names of Mompesson and Stanley, for their names were 'household words.' If he did, John Westley and Samuel Annesley, those heroes of Nonconformity, would make their strong appeal to him, and hasten the banishment of the narrow prejudices of his earlier years.

Leaving the Peak, Wesley journeyed westward. On April 10 he was in Liverpool. We see him doing work which he heartily disliked. A legal document irritated him. We do not wonder that the deed he read in Liverpool made him impatient with lawyers and trustees. On March 11, 1766, the deed of the preaching-house in Pitt Street came into his hands. He had prepared 'a model deed' for the settlement of preaching-houses, but for some years it failed to be accepted. We know what he thought of the Liverpool deed. 'It takes up three large skins of parchment, and so could not cost less than six guineas; whereas our own deed, transcribed by a friend, would not have cost six shillings. It is verbose beyond all sense and reason, and withal so ambiguously worded that one passage only might find matter for a suit of ten or twelve years in Chancery. It everywhere calls the house a meeting-house, a name which I particularly object to. It leaves no power, either to the assistant or me, so much as to place or displace a steward. Neither I, nor all the Conference, have power to send the same preacher two years together. To crown all, if a preacher is not appointed at the Conference the trustees and the congregation are to choose one by most votes! And can any one wonder I dislike this deed, which tears the Methodist discipline up by the roots? Is it not strange that any who have the least regard, either for me or our discipline, should scruple to alter this uncouth deed?' We listen to these lamentations with sympathy; we know they made no impression on men who were determined to have their own way. In process of time, deeds drafted on somewhat similar lines made their appearance, and became storm-centres of dangerous discussions.

On April 30, Wesley reached Newcastle. He needed rest. He says, 'I know not to what it is owing that I have felt more wearisome this spring than I have done before for many years, unless to my fall at Christmas, which perhaps weakened the springs of my whole machine more than I was sensible of.' He confesses his love of quietness and silence, but knew that

rest has its penalties. His ankle and knee gave him some trouble ; his shoulder frequently complained. He had leisure to notice these effects of his fall, and began to think that in this world he would never be free from its results. But he blessed God that he had sufficient strength for the work to which he was called, and comforted himself with the thought that when he could not walk any farther he could take a horse and now and then a chaise.

From a letter he wrote to his friend, Ebenezer Blackwell, from Sunderland on May 6 we find that his wife had joined him in Newcastle. She was on her way, with her daughter, to visit Lady Maxwell in Edinburgh. She had been very ill, but was much better. We think it must have been on this visit to Newcastle that Jenny Vazeille met William Smith, whom she married three years later.[1] Towards the end of May the little party reached Edinburgh. John Wesley visited Aberdeen, Glasgow, and other places. In Glasgow he met Dr. Gillies once more, and was comforted by his friendship. On June 24, in company with Duncan Wright, he reached Dumfries. Having given their horses a short bait, the travellers pushed on, hoping to reach Solway Firth before the tide came in. Wesley describes their adventures. He says : ' Designing to call at an inn by the Firth side, we inquired the way, and were directed to leave the main road and go straight to the house which we saw before us. In ten minutes Duncan Wright was embogged. However, the horse plunged on, and got through. I was inclined to turn back ; but, Duncan telling me I needed only to go a little to the left, I did so, and sunk at once to my horse's shoulders. He sprung up twice, and twice sunk again, each time deeper than before. At the third plunge he threw me on one side, and we both made shift to scramble out. I was covered with fine, soft mud from my feet to the crown of my head ; yet, blessed be God, not hurt at all. But we could not cross till between seven and eight o'clock. An honest man crossed with us, who went two miles out of his way to guide us over the sands to Skinburness, where we found a little clean house and passed a comfortable night.'

John Wesley made his way to Newcastle-on-Tyne, and spent several weeks among the Northern Societies. On Tuesday, August 12, he attended the Conference in Leeds. It lasted four

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 234.

days. In his *Journal* he gives a cheerful description of its proceedings. He says, 'A happier Conference we never had, nor a more profitable one. It was both begun and ended in love, and with a solemn sense of the presence of God.' As the *Minutes* of this Conference were immediately published it is possible to get a clear sight of the business transacted. The report is unusually complete, and it causes us to wonder at Wesley's description of the harmony that prevailed.

Passing by the routine business, we will fix our attention on two subjects that were discussed. The question, 'Are we not Dissenters?' was raised. Wesley had carefully prepared his answer, and we must consider it. He began by saying: 'We are not *Dissenters* in the only sense which our law acknowledges: namely, "persons who believe it is sinful to attend the service of the Church"; for we do attend it at all opportunities.' This definition often gave him much satisfaction. We must remember that he was speaking in the eighteenth century. But, even then, the definition was inadequate. However, it consoled him. He then proceeded to give the members of the Conference the following advice:

As we are not Dissenters from the Church now, so we will do nothing willingly which tends to a separation from it. Therefore let every assistant immediately so order his circuit that no preacher may be hindered from attending the church more than two Sundays in a month. Never make light of going to church, either by word or deed.

But some may say, 'our own service is public worship.' Yes, *in a sense*; but not such as supersedes the Church Service. We never designed it should. We have a hundred times professed the contrary. It presupposes public prayer, like the sermons at the University. Therefore I have over and over advised, 'Use no *long prayer*, either before or after sermon.' Therefore I myself frequently use only a collect, and never enlarge in prayer, unless at intercession, or on a watch-night, or on some extraordinary occasion.

If it were designed to be instead of Church Service, it would be essentially defective. For it seldom has the four grand parts of public prayer: deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. Neither is it, even on the Lord's day, concluded with the Lord's Supper.

The hour for it on that day, unless where there is some peculiar reason for a variation, should be five in the morning, as well as five in the evening. Why should we make God's day the shortest of the seven?

But if the people put ours in the place of the Church Service, we hurt them that stay with us, and ruin them that leave us. For then they

will go nowhere, but lounge the Sabbath away, without any public worship at all. I advise, therefore, all the Methodists in England and Ireland, who have been brought up in the Church, constantly to attend the Service of the Church, at least every Lord's day.[1]

The Conference must have listened to this advice to those 'who had been brought up in the Church' with perplexity. Some of the preachers did not answer to that description. They were Scotsmen, who were accustomed to think that all Church of England men in Scotland were Dissenters. But many more would be surprised that Wesley had forgotten the services held in London and Bristol, at which the sacraments were administered and the Church prayers were read. The Methodists in those cities had their special privileges, and would never think of surrendering them. In the present day our wonder is excited by another fact. If the Methodists were not Dissenters, why were so many preachers and preaching-houses licensed under the Toleration Act? It was many years before Wesley awoke to the danger incurred by members of the Church of England who licensed their houses under the Act, and by preachers who claimed to be Churchmen and yet secured licences. Let us forget this Leeds Conference for a moment, and look into the future. In Wesley's *Works* there is a letter addressed to 'A Member of Parliament,' probably William Wilberforce. It is dated July, 1790. In it Wesley describes the case of a man in whose house a Methodist service had been conducted, who had been fined £20 by two justices under the terms of the Conventicle Act. He appealed to Quarter Sessions, but all the Justices averred that 'the Methodists could have no relief from the Act of Toleration, because they went to church; and that, so long as they did so the Conventicle Act should be executed upon them.' On the Sunday before Wesley's letter was written a preacher had been seized by a constable sent by a justice. He was licensed. But the justice would not release him until he had paid £20. He was told that his licence was good for nothing, because he was a Churchman. Wesley, in his letter to the Member of Parliament, says: 'Now, sir, what can the Methodists do? They are liable to be ruined by the Conventicle Act, and they have no relief from the Act of Toleration!'[2] Wesley, for many years, was buoyed up by

[1] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 58–59. [2] Wesley's *Works*, xiii. 126, third ed.

the decisions of the King's Bench, which were in favour of the protective value of licences granted to Methodist preachers and preaching-houses; but their insufficiency in the case of people who declared themselves to be members of the Church of England was suspected by men who were possessed of judicial minds. In 1790 it was admitted by Wesley. After his death the Methodists led the successful attack which swept the Conventicle Act out of existence.

The second subject of special importance brought before the Leeds Conference of 1766 concerned the power which Wesley exercised over the Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland. In dealing with the previous question—the relation of the Methodist Societies to the Church of England—we have hesitated to take his point of view; but no one who has followed the evolution of early Methodist administration will challenge his description of the origin and growth of his power over the members, stewards, and preachers of the Societies he had formed. In this series of books on John Wesley we have watched the growth of the organization of the Methodist Societies; at every forward step we have seen the presence and value of his influence. As to his 'power' it will be sufficient to reproduce a few paragraphs from the *Minutes* of the Leeds Conference. Wesley says:

> What is that power? It is a power of admitting into and excluding from the Societies under my care; of choosing and removing stewards; of receiving or not receiving helpers; of appointing them when, where, and how to help me; and of desiring any of them to meet me, when I see good. And as it was merely in obedience to the providence of God, and for the good of the people, that I first accepted this power, which I never sought, nay, a hundred times laboured to throw off; so it is on the same considerations, not for profit, honour, or pleasure, that I use it at this day.
>
> But several gentlemen are much offended at my having *so much power*. My answer to them is this:
>
> I did not seek any part of this power. It came upon me unawares. But when it was come, not daring to bury that talent, I used it to the best of my judgement.
>
> Yet I never was fond of it. I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden; the burden which God lays upon me, and, therefore, I dare not yet lay it down.
>
> But if you can tell me any one, or any five men, to whom I may transfer this burden, who *can* and *will* do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you.[1]

[1] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 61.

As we read Wesley's defence of his position as the chief leader of the Methodist people we seem to hear his voice, and the voice often reveals the man. His accident at Christmas had shaken him. He told the preachers that he did not depend on seeing another Conference, and that he spoke 'as taking leave of them.' Manliness, sincerity, courage, and a compelling sense of duty, mark his convincing 'apology.' He followed it by giving counsels to the preachers about the spirit in which they should do their work, and sent them away with a quickened sense of its great importance.

Wesley's statement concerning the condition of his health must have depressed the Conference. There could be no doubt that his accident had severely shaken him ; his adventure on the shore of Solway Firth, though he treated it lightly, must have emphasized the warning he had received. But the thought of giving up horse-riding caused him much trouble of mind. When his friend, Ebenezer Blackwell, was dangerously ill in 1764, he was advised on his recovery to give up riding on horseback from Lewisham to the City. He accepted the advice, and Wesley was alarmed at the news. Writing to him, he said : 'I really am under apprehensions lest that chariot should cost you your life. If, after having been accustomed to ride on horseback for many years, you should now exchange a horse for a carriage, it cannot be that you should have good health. It is a vain thing to expect it. I judge of your case by my own. I must be on horseback for life, if I would be healthy. Now and then, indeed, if I could afford it, I should rest myself for fifty miles in a chaise ; but, without riding near as much as I do now, I must never look for health.'[1] It was not long before he had to face the problem on which he had expressed so strong an opinion in his friend's case. We have seen him on April 22, 1765, riding in a post-chaise to Alnwick with his friends Miss Mary Lewen and Miss Peggy Dale. On July 9, 1766, in a letter to Charles Wesley, he says that Miss Lewen had given him 'a chaise and a pair of horses.' The fact is recorded without any comment on the probable effects on his health.

John Wesley got back to London on August 20. His return had been hastened by the request of Lady Huntingdon, who

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 176, third ed. Ebenezer Blackwell died on April 21, 1782 ; so Wesley's forebodings were not fulfilled.

earnestly desired to bring the evangelical leaders into a closer union. Her scheme was effective in restoring 'a firm union' between the Wesleys and their old friend George Whitefield. Relations had been strained between them; but John Wesley says: 'My brother and I conferred with him every day; and, let the honourable men do what they please, we resolved, by the grace of God, to go on, hand in hand, through honour and dishonour.' Lady Huntingdon invited John Wesley to preach in her chapel at Bath. He did so on August 26, to the surprise of many who had not expected to see him in that pulpit.

From Bath, John Wesley went to Bristol. On Thursday, August 28, he made an arrangement that brought him great relief. Kingswood School was a burden on him which he had found hard to bear. But during this visit he delivered the management of the 'House' to stewards on whom he could depend. The measure of his relief may be judged by this entry in his *Journal*: 'So I have cast a heavy load off my shoulders. Blessed be God for able and faithful men, who will do His work without any temporal reward!'

Leaving Bristol, Wesley set out on a visit to the Societies in Cornwall. On his way he preached in 'the new House' at Shaftesbury, where he probably met John Haime. On August 30 there is a notable entry in Wesley's *Journal*. He says:

> We rode to Stalbridge, long the seat of war by a senseless, insolent mob, encouraged by their betters, so called, to outrage their quiet neighbours. For what? Why, they were mad; they were Methodists. So, to bring them to their senses, they would beat their brains out. They broke their windows, leaving not one whole pane of glass, spoiled their goods, and assaulted their persons with dirt and rotten eggs and stones whenever they appeared in the street. But no magistrate, though they applied to several, would show them either mercy or justice. At length they wrote to me. I ordered a lawyer to write to the rioters. He did so, but they set him at nought. We then moved the Court of King's Bench. By various artifices they got the trial put off from one assizes to the other for eighteen months. But it fell so much the heavier on themselves when they were found guilty; and from that time, finding there is law for Methodists, they have suffered them to be at peace.

Wesley did not return to Bristol until September 23. During his visit to Cornwall he preached once more 'in the natural

amphitheatre' at Gwennap. In the present day his descriptions of the 'Pit,' and his estimates of the number of people in his congregations, have been challenged. It may be useful if we record his description of the place given in his reference to the service he conducted there on Sunday, September 14, 1766. He says: 'The congregation in Redruth at one was the largest I ever had seen there; but small compared to that which assembled at five in the natural amphitheatre at Gwennap, far the finest I know in the kingdom. It is a round green hollow, gently shelving down, about fifty feet deep; but I suppose it is two hundred across one way, and near three hundred the other. I believe there were full twenty thousand people; and, the evening being calm, all could hear.' Those who visit the small 'Pit' in the present day, and think that it is the 'amphitheatre' where Wesley preached, are overwhelmed by his estimate of the number of the congregation. They rush to the conclusion that Wesley was not a judge of the size of the congregations to which he preached. But the explanation given by the note-writer in Wesley's Standard *Journal* throws light on the problem. He says: 'The "Gwennap Pit" of a later date scarcely answers to Wesley's descriptions. It is now, apparently, an artificial circular hollow, terraced round with seats, tier above tier. The estimate of twenty thousand hearers in the Pit, as it now is, is physically impossible. Many have thought, after careful investigation, that much may be said in support of Wesley's measurements and calculations. In 1806, repair and reconstruction took place, with the formation of twelve terraced steps, 4 ft. wide, for seating; the old shafts were filled in and the road diverted. It was reopened on Whit-Monday, June 18, 1807, and has been used continuously for preaching on Whit-Monday ever since.[1] It is clear that the present pit is not the amphitheatre to which Wesley refers.'

John Wesley returned to Bristol on September 24, and made it his centre for work in the neighbourhood until October 19. We are specially interested in a visit he paid to Bath on Sunday, October 5. He administered the sacrament in Lady Huntingdon's chapel in the early morning, and afterwards preached there at eleven o'clock. At this service a man was present who is well known to all who are acquainted with

[1] See *Journal*, v. p. 387, *note*; also *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv. 219.

eighteenth-century literature. From a letter he wrote to his friend, Sir Horace Mann, in 1749, we are aware that he considered that Methodism was a sect which was then increasing 'as fast as almost ever any religious nonsense did.'[1] Let us see if, in the interval, he had modified his dislike to the prevailing 'sect.' He gives us a picture of Wesley which is worth reproducing. He says, 'Wesley is a clean, elderly man, fresh-coloured, his hair smoothly combed, but with a little *soupçon* of curl at the ends.' Then he comments on the preacher and his sermon. He describes Wesley as 'wondrous clever, but as evidently an actor as Garrick.' Then he says that he spoke his sermon, 'but so fast, and with so little accent,' that he was sure it had been often uttered. Still, there were 'parts and eloquence in it.' Until nearly the end of the sermon the critic seems to have listened to the preacher; but when Wesley raised his voice, towards the end of the sermon, and 'told stories like Latimer,' he lost patience, and considered that he acted 'very ugly enthusiasm.' He also says that the preacher 'decried learning,' which shows that his attention was wandering. He began to look about him. He gives his judgement of the congregation in these words: 'Except a few from curiosity, and some *honourable women*, the congregation was very mean.'[2]

Such was Horace Walpole's judgement on a preacher whom he had come to hear 'out of curiosity.' We think he was undoubtedly right in supposing that Wesley had preached before on the subject of the sermon. The text was, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' That was a much-neglected duty in the eighteenth century. The only point in Walpole's criticism that causes us to pause is the charge of 'very ugly enthusiasm.' 'Enthusiasm' is a word the meaning of which is beclouded by the variety of its definitions. We are convinced that the world will not be won for Christ by 'vulgar enthusiasm,' but we are also convinced that it will not be won by men who lack Wesley's passion for the salvation of those who listened to his appeals.

Wesley got back to London on Saturday, October 25. The next day he preached at West Street in the morning to a crowded audience, and in the evening at the Foundery. He

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 91.
[2] See Wesley's Standard *Journal*, v. 188–189, *note*.

was in his right element once more. In his *Journal* he reveals his conception of an ideal life—' How pleasing would it be to play between Bristol and London, and preach always to such congregations as these ! ' Then he pauses, and the vision fades. He adds the words, ' But what account, then, should I give of my stewardship when I can " be no longer steward " ? ' He visited some country places, and on the last day of October he returned to London. Sad news awaited him. He found it needful to hasten to Leytonstone. His friend, Miss Lewen, had been staying with Miss Bosanquet, and had been touched by the hand of death. When Wesley reached Leytonstone he found that he had come too late. Miss Lewen had died the day before, after an illness of five days. Her last words show that she died in the light of the celestial vision. She cried out earnestly, ' Do you not see Him ? There He is ! Glory ! glory ! glory ! I shall be with Him for ever—for ever—for ever ! ' Saturday, November 1, was All Saints' Day, a day that Wesley always observed with reverent joy. He was accustomed on that day to sing the hymn in which these words occurred :

> The Church triumphant in His love,
> Their mighty joys we know ;
> They praise the Lamb in hymns above,
> And we in hymns below.

He strongly believed that ' God has knit together His elect in one communion and fellowship ' ; and at West Street, as usual, there was a solemn service in which the congregation joined him in praising God for all His saints. His thoughts would turn to Leytonstone for a few moments ; then they would rise to the great company of the saints of all the Churches who had fought the good fight and were resting in the unfading glory of the Beatific Vision.

## XV

## AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE

In 1767 John Wesley was in Ireland from March 29 to July 29, his visit lasting four months. He visited the Societies and met with much encouragement and some disappointments. We are surprised to find that his visit to Limerick depressed him. When he reached the town he found only the remembrance of the fire kindled two years before this visit. On Monday, May 18, he spoke to the members of the Society severally. He says: 'Most of them appeared to be honest and upright. But a general faintness seemed to have spread among them; there was no zeal, no vigour of grace.' On Thursday of the same week he preached about noon at Ballingarrane to 'what was left of the poor Palatines.' But although disappointed he did not lose heart. The following Sunday he preached in 'the Old Camp.' It was crowded, the people being 'closely wedged together.' After this service he had a solemn hour at the meeting of the Society. He was much encouraged by the change that had been effected in a few days. The voice of joy was once more heard in Limerick. In recording the fact, he declared that the members were set upon their feet once again, and he hoped that 'they would run with patience the race set before them.'

Wesley's anxiety concerning the condition of the Methodists of Limerick was relieved; but there is no sign of the brightening of the sky in his record of his visit to Ballingarrane. America was his difficulty. Those who know what was happening in that country in 1767 can sympathize with him, but cannot share his depression. They can say, 'Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs.' That is a conviction which makes a man, who is working for God, calm and courageous in the midst of seeming failures. But we must remember Wesley's life-long sensitiveness to the loss of his friends and helpers. America at that time was

making claims on his workers. It was not only in Ireland that the westward drift was telling against him. Let us look at England for a few moments. We have seen Lieutenant Thomas Webb, of the 48th regiment, on the battle-fields of Louisbourg and Quebec. In 1765 he was in Bristol. In the month of March he was under deep religious conviction, but he could not find a way to the experience of 'the peace that passeth understanding.' Towards the end of the month he met Mr. Cary, a Moravian minister, and while conversing with him he saw his way to the Cross and rejoiced in the consciousness of personal salvation. He went to the church of which Wesley's friend, James Rouquet, was the minister. He had been a master in Kingswood School, and he soon introduced Webb to the Methodists. He became a member of the Society in 1765. One day he was visiting Bath and found his way into the Methodist preaching-house there. The congregation waited for some time; but the appointed preacher did not arrive. The lieutenant took his place, and preached his first sermon to the great satisfaction of the people. He was then in the thirty-first year of his age, full of vigour and the right kind of enthusiasm. Wesley heard of this occurrence, saw at once the value of his services, and gave him the position of a local preacher. He began a useful career in England. But his stay in this country was short. The military authorities sent him to America soon after he began to preach. He was appointed barrack-master of Albany, that town among the mountains that rise not far from the Hudson River. Atmore says: 'As soon as he arrived there, he made a point of holding family prayer at his house, at which his neighbours frequently attended. After a while he ventured to give them a word of exhortation; and, from the good effects which appeared, he was encouraged to go farther still, even into the highways and hedges.'[1] We must leave him for a time. There can be no doubt that Wesley regretted the loss of such a valuable 'helper,' but soon he caught sight of the 'increasing purpose.'

John Wesley left Ireland on July 29. He paid a short visit to Scotland; and, on Thursday, August 6, he reached Newcastle. His original intention was to be at Bristol in August, but important events occurred that caused him to change his route. His wife, after her visit to Lady Maxwell,

[1] Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 446.

had gone to Newcastle and stayed for a long time, with her daughter, at the Orphan House.[1] It was fortunate that John Wesley postponed his visit to Bristol, for circumstances had arisen which demanded his presence in the North of England. He had an opportunity of seeing Mr. Lewen, who was the executor of his daughter's will. The residuary legatees were bent on contesting its provisions. We are specially concerned with one aspect of the case. Shortly before her death Miss Mary Lewen boarded with Miss Bosanquet at the orphanage at Leytonstone. She was much impressed by the success of the work done there by Miss Bosanquet and her helper, Mrs. Ryan. In conversation with the former she told her she wished to leave her a large sum of money to enable her to carry on her charitable work. Miss Bosanquet strongly objected to the proposal. Eventually, on the plea of expenses incurred on her account, and for two children taken into the house, a codicil was added to the will leaving to Miss Bosanquet the sum of £2,000. In October 1766 it seemed that Miss Lewen's death was approaching. Miss Bosanquet's objection to the legacy revived. Yielding to the persuasion of Miss Bosanquet and Mrs. Ryan, Miss Lewen allowed the codicil to be burned. Then, when it seemed certain that death was near, she said to the sisters who were sitting up with her, ' Give me pen and paper, for I cannot die easy unless I write something of my mind concerning sister Bosanquet having the £2,000.' Miss Bosanquet thought that it was not right to destroy this paper. She informed Miss Lewen's relations of its existence. It is clear that it did not possess legal validity, and it was disregarded. But, after Miss Lewen's death, in the beginning of the year 1767, it was confidently affirmed that Miss Bosanquet had forced Miss Lewen to make a will when she was dying, leaving to her the whole estate, and that she had thus wronged her relations. We can understand how the gossips would revel in this extraordinary story. But, as a matter of fact, Miss Bosanquet, as she herself said, ' did not gain one penny by Miss Lewen's death. On the contrary their friendship had caused her to be many pounds out of pocket.'[2]

[1] A note-writer in Wesley's *Journal* says that it is probable that she remained at the Orphan House until the marriage of her daughter to Mr. William Smith. It took place on March 7, 1769.

[2] See John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 226, 227, *notes*.

On August 11 John Wesley saw Mr. Lewen, and they came to 'a friendly conclusion.' Mr. Lewen agreed to pay the legacies that were specified in the will; and the matters in dispute were relinquished. Wesley rejoiced in the disappointment of the lawyers, and in the fact that Miss Lewen's design had been 'in some measure answered.' In her will Miss Lewen left John Wesley a legacy of £1,000. Tyerman, in recording this fact, says that it was probably the largest sum Wesley ever had in his possession. We presume that it was paid him in November, 1767. We know that it had all been given away to the poor before October 6, 1768. That fact comes to light in a letter which he then wrote to his sister, Mrs. Hall, whose husband had deserted her. Her story is one of the saddest of those which have been written concerning Wesley's sisters. He often went to see her in the days of her calamity; but it was not until the legacy was all dispersed that she seems to have acquainted him with her poverty. It is well known that he considered himself as 'God's steward for the poor,' and that he found it almost impossible to retain money in his possession when the cry of those who were in need reached his ear. But when Mrs. Hall's letter came his benevolent fund had nearly vanished. His reply to his sister is a revelation of his character. Writing from Kingswood he said:

DEAR PATTY,—You do not consider, money never stays with me: it would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find a way into my heart. Therefore, you should have spoken to me while I was in London, and before Miss Lewen's money flew away. However, I know not but I may still spare you £5, provided you will not say, 'I will never ask you again,' because this is more than you can tell; and you must not promise more than you can perform. . . .

I am, dear Patty, your ever affectionate,
JOHN WESLEY.

This letter seems to have been brought to light in 1845.[1] It confirms the impression which all who have closely studied the character of John Wesley have received. It was written with a brother's frankness, and it certainly was not intended for the public eye. But having been published, not only in the *Magazine*, but by Tyerman in his *Life and Times of Wesley*,

[1] See *Methodist Magazine*, 1845, 1168.

we reproduce it, as it sheds light on John Wesley's character. As time went on he found that indiscriminate alms-giving has its disadvantages; but to the end of his life he followed the example of one who could say: 'I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless also, that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.'[1]

John Wesley left Newcastle on Wednesday, August 12, and travelled by coach to London. He arrived there on Friday of that week, 'having run that day a hundred and ten miles.' On Tuesday, August 18, he began to hold the Annual Conference. The printed *Minutes* bring out the constitution and business of this Conference with exceptional clearness; we commend the records of the proceedings of the Conference of 1767 to all students of the constitution of the Methodist Church. They will find hints in the *Minutes* which seem prophecies of days that were to come. As to the constitution of the Conference, it will be seen that on Tuesday and Wednesday it was composed of the 'assistants and a select number of the preachers.' The attendance of preachers had recently been so great that it had been determined to lessen the number. It had been found that the absence of the preachers from their circuits during the holding of the Conference had in many places caused much loss; and it was necessary to consider the question. Wesley had already acted in the matter. Before the Conference met he had written a letter to John Whitehead, in which there was this note on the attendance of preachers at the Conference: 'I think we may steer a middle course. I will only require a select number to be present. But I will permit any other travelling preacher, who desires it, to be present with them'[2] Passing from the preachers' session of the Conference of 1767, we find that on the Thursday and Friday, not only were George Whitefield and Howell Harris present, but 'many stewards and local preachers.'[3] A note-writer in John Wesley's *Journal* says that Whitefield represented the Countess of Huntingdon's

[1] Job xxix. 12–13.

[2] *Journal*, v. 227 *note*. Those who are acquainted with the proceedings of modern May District Synods will recognize the origin of the lists that show the ministers who are 'elected' to attend the Conference, and those who have 'permission' to attend.

[3] The attendance of Whitefield and Harris is noted by Christopher Hopper in his 'Life' in *Early Methodist Preachers*, i. 214.

Connexion, and Harris the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales. The statement may be correct. We must remember the change that had taken place in the relations of Lady Huntingdon and the Wesleys, and the long-established friendship of the Wesleys and Howell Harris. We venture to suggest another reason for the presence of Whitefield and Harris in a representative character. It was in 1767 that Lady Huntingdon formed the purpose of establishing a college for the purpose of preparing young men as 'preachers of the gospel.' It was her original intention to open it to students of all Protestant denominations. The men who were to be trained in it were to be at liberty to take orders in the Established Church or to join any other section of the Christian Church. Lady Huntingdon consulted a large number of her ministerial and other friends, and the scheme took shape and was realized. She fixed on Trevecca as the place where the college should be erected. It is probable that her reason for making that choice was that the students would have the advantage of Howell Harris's ministrations.[1]

The *Minutes* of the Conference of 1767 show that progress was being made in the attempt to create a governing body of the Methodist Societies. In the previous year the Conference had determined to adopt a stricter method of admitting preachers to the itinerant work. In former years it was not necessary that probationers should be present at the Conference when accepted for the 'full work'; but in 1767 it was determined that, for the time to come, they should not only be present, but should be examined, one by one, and instructed in the duties of their office. Nine men were 'admitted on trial' and among them we note the name of Francis Asbury. The names of the preachers who 'desisted from travelling' were published in the *Minutes*. In 1766 the question was asked, 'What preachers are laid aside this year?' The initials of two men appear in the answer, but that method was found to be inadequate and it was altered in 1767.[2] After the assistants had been selected, the preachers were appointed to their stations. There were forty-one circuits, one hundred and two travelling preachers, and two supernumeraries—

[1] See *Welsh Calvinistic Methodism*, by William Williams, 131, 133.

[2] The publication of the full names of ministers 'who have ceased to be recognized' by the Conference continued until 1911. After that year no names have been published. It has been sufficient to say, 'Their names are recorded in the *Journal*.'

Christopher Hopper and John Johnson. The introduction of the names of supernumeraries was a new departure. It should also be noted that Robert Costerdine was appointed to Haworth for a third year. For the first time we have a reliable return of the number of members in the Methodist circuits in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. In Ireland there were 2,801; in London, 2,250; in Cornwall, 2,160; in Lancashire, 1,875; in Newcastle, 1,837; in Birstall, 1,491; in Haworth, 1,366; in Leeds, 1,120; in Bristol, 1,064; in York, 1,000. Those circuits that had less than a thousand members were: Staffordshire, 906; Wiltshire, 840; The Dales, 833; Yarm, 825; Epworth, 769; Derbyshire, 741; Grimsby, 693; Sheffield, 591; Cheshire, 525; Devon, 413; Norwich, 293; Bedford, 208; Wales, 232; Sussex, 176; Aberdeen, 174; Edinburgh, 150; Kent, 147; Colchester, 145; Oxfordshire, 142; Glasgow, 64; Dundee, 40; and Dunbar, 40. The total membership is returned as 25,911.

In considering this return of the number of members, we must bear in mind the varying geographical extents of the circuits; the difference in the length of time the Methodists had worked in the several localities; and, above all, the strictness that was observed in making the returns. The figures relate to members who met in class and observed the 'Rules of the Society.' John Wesley did not hesitate to cut down the numbers in a Society in which the class-meeting was wholly neglected, or irregularly attended by persons without sufficient excuse.

We think it must have been on the third day of the Conference when several important questions were discussed which affected the Societies at large. We have seen that the settlement of the preaching-houses gave Wesley great concern. He had gone to his lawyers; they had consulted three eminent counsel; and, as a result, a form of deed had been drawn up which had been printed in the *Large Minutes*. But it is notorious that it was long before trustees were inclined to adopt that 'form.' In the Pitt Street Chapel deed clauses had been introduced that caused Wesley much concern. The discussion of this subject in the Conference reveals Wesley's dangerous hopelessness in this matter. The Conference seems to have shared it. Speaking of the new 'model deed,' this was the opinion with which he commended

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it, and with which the Conference seems to have been satisfied. If there was some defect in the new deed 'who would go to law with the body of Methodists? And, if they did, would any Court in England put them out of possession? Especially when the intent of the deed is plain and undeniable?' These questions are weighted with weariness. But a time was coming when Wesley's successors would have to look at the question again, and would have to put aside the form of settlement which he considered so 'safe.'

This discussion on chapel deeds evoked a suggestion that had far-reaching effects. It appears that the Wednesbury trustees had expressed a fear that the Conference might impose on them one preacher for many years. The Conference, having considered the matter, determined that, in order to allay the fears, not only of the Wednesbury trustees but of many others, the following words should be inserted in the deeds of preaching-houses: 'Provided that the same preacher shall not be sent, ordinarily above one, never above two years together.' We do not know how widely this suggestion was accepted at the time, but it was evidently in John Wesley's mind when, in 1784, he gave directions for the preparation of his important '*Deed of Declaration.*'[1]

It is only necessary to indicate one other act of this Conference. The question was asked: 'How may we prevent bribery at the ensuing election of members of Parliament?' The answer was: '1. Largely show the wickedness of thus selling our country in every Society. 2. Do the same thing in private conversation. 3. Read everywhere the *Word to a Freeholder*, and disperse it, as it were, with both hands. But observe, a voter may suffer his expenses to be borne, and not incur any blame.' It must be noted that John Wesley had already taken his stand against the wholesale corruption that accompanied the elections to Parliament. He was not only a Methodist, but an Englishman; and everything that brought dishonour on his country roused him to active opposition. He carried the Conference with him in this attempt to combat the bribery that then prevailed at elections in this country. But, so far as the nation was concerned, he had undertaken what was then 'a forlorn hope.' He was, however, accustomed to attempt the seemingly impossible. In Dr. William Hunt's

[1] See Simon's *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline*, 378.

volume of *The Political History of England* we are able to see the magnitude of the forces that were arrayed against him. It will be useful to insert what he says about the election of 1768.

> The General Election of 1768 was even more corrupt than that of 1761. Again both the court and the nabobs came well to the front. Borough-mongers did a business in seats much as house-agents did in houses. One of them laughed when Lord Chesterfield offered £2,500 for a seat for his son; the nabobs, he said, had raised prices to at least £3,000; some seats had fetched £4,000; two as much as £5,000. George Selwyn took £9,000 for the two seats for Ludgershall. The city of Oxford offered to return its two sitting members if they would pay the city's debts—£5,670. They informed the House of Commons of the offer, and ten of the leading citizens were confined for five days in Newgate, and afterwards knelt at the bar of the house and were reprimanded by the Speaker—a solemn farce, for they sold the seats to two neighbouring magnates, and are said to have arranged the transaction while they were in prison. Holland bought a seat for his son, Charles James Fox, then a youth of nineteen. As was natural in his father's son, Fox supported the ministers, and was soon distinguished in Parliament by his opposition to all liberal measures, and outside it by reckless gambling and extravagance.[1]

The election of 1768 will long be remembered by students of English history. It was then that John Wilkes was elected as member for Middlesex, and the great riots took place which terrified London. If we add that fact to Dr. Hunt's statement concerning the prevalence of 'corruption,' we shall get some insight into the character of that extraordinary election. John Wesley must have felt that his attempt to diminish the evil of bribery was an almost hopeless task; but he was determined that he and his preachers should put forth all their strength to warn the voters in the Methodist Societies against the disgrace of receiving money for their vote.

During the remainder of the year 1767 John Wesley found full occupation in visiting the Societies in Wales, Somersetshire, Hampshire, Kent, and Norfolk. With one other notice we will conclude our record of the events of this year. On December 1 he was making his way by coach to Norwich. Being alone, he considered 'several points of importance.' They concerned his own teaching of the doctrine of Justification by Faith and the Knowledge of Salvation. After pondering these important

[1] *The Political History of England*, x. 94–95.

subjects, he reached conclusions that appeared to him 'clear as the day.' The result of his brooding was that he came to see that 'a man may be saved who cannot express himself properly concerning Imputed Righteousness. Therefore to do this is not necessary to salvation. Further, that a man may be saved who has not clear conceptions of it. Therefore, clear conceptions of it are not necessary to salvation. Yea, it is not necessary to salvation to use the phrase at all. That a pious churchman who has not clear conceptions even of Justification by Faith may be saved. Therefore clear conceptions even of this are not necessary to salvation. That a Mystic, who denies Justification by Faith, Mr. Law for instance, may be saved.' His conclusion of the whole matter was, 'If so, is it not high time for us to return to the plain word, "He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him"?'

## XVI

## OXFORD AND THE NORTH

In March, 1768, six students belonging to St. Edmund Hall were expelled from the University on charges which included 'attending conventicles, meeting, praying, expounding Scripture, and singing hymns, in private houses.' These men had no direct connexion with John Wesley. One of them had received some training from John Fletcher, and Lady Huntingdon was acquainted with all of them. They were Calvinistic Methodists; two of them, after their expulsion, were admitted to Lady Huntingdon's College at Trevecca. But the incident casts so much light on the Oxford of the eighteenth century, and the attitude of some of the ruling powers of the University towards evangelical religion in 1768, that it will be useful to record the proceedings against these students. We will take the description of the proceedings from the pages of Dr. A. D. Godley's *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century*:

> In 1768 the Vice-Chancellor, Durell, was invited by a tutor of St. Edmund Hall to hold a 'Visitation' for the purpose of pronouncing judgement on six students of that society accused of Methodism and certain concomitant vices: they had preached in conventicles: they held dangerous views on Justification by Faith: several of them were low-born persons, quite out of their element in the University of Oxford. In three cases the charge of illiteracy and inability to perform the exercises of the Hall was thrown in as a makeweight: but as all, illiterate or otherwise, were formally expelled, it is clear that the real gravamen was a religious or a social offence rather than an intellectual failing. This is made pretty clear by the notes taken during the trial by Dr. Nowell, the Public Orator and Principal of St. Mary's Hall. For instance, it is noted of James Matthews: 'Accused that he was brought up to the trade of a weaver—that he had kept a tap-house—confessed.—Accused that he is totally ignorant of the Greek and Latin languages: which appeared by his declining all examination. —Said he had been under the tuition of two clergymen for five years, viz. Mr. Davies and Newton: though it did not appear that he had during that time made any proficiency in learning—was about thirty

years old—accused of being a reputed Methodist by the evidence of Mr. Atkins, formerly of Queen's College—that he was assistant to Mr. Davies a reputed Methodist, that he was instructed by Mr. Fletcher a reputed Methodist—that he maintained the necessity of the sensible impulse of the Holy Spirit—that he entered himself of Edmund-Hall, with a design to get into holy Orders, for which he had offered himself a candidate, though he still continues to be wholly illiterate, and incapable of doing the exercises of the Hall—proved.—That he had frequented illicit conventicles held in a private house in Oxford—confessed. He produced two testimonials, one vouched by the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, the other by the Bishop of Worcester.' It is noted of Thomas Jones that he was 'Accused that he had been brought up to the trade of a barber, which he had followed very lately —confessed.—Had made a very small proficiency in the Greek and Latin languages—was two years studying, and still incapable of performing the statutable exercises of the Hall—that he had been at the meetings at Mr. Durbridge's—that he had expounded the Scriptures to a mixed congregation at Wheaton Aston, though not in holy Orders, and prayed extempore. All this he confessed. He urged in his defence that he had asked his Tutor whether he thought it wrong for him to pray or instruct in a private family, and that his Tutor answered, he did not, which he said was the reason of his continuing to do it.'

The sentence pronounced on one of the victims may serve as a sample: *ex uno disce omnes*. 'It having also appeared to me that Benjamin Kay of the said Hall, by his own confession, had frequented illicit conventicles in a private house in this town: where he had heard extempore prayers frequently offered up by one Hewett, a stay-maker. Moreover, it having been proved by sufficient evidence that he held methodistical principles: viz. the doctrine of absolute election: that the Spirit of God works irresistibly: that once a child of God always a child of God: that he had endeavoured to instil the same principles into others, and exhorted them to continue steadfastly in them against all opposition.—Therefore, I, D. Durell, by virtue of my visitatorial power, and with the advice and opinion of each and every one of my assessors, the reverend persons before mentioned, do expel the said Benjamin Kay from the said Hall and hereby pronounce him also expelled.'[1]

Dr. Godley, so well known as the Oxford Public Orator, did great service when he rescued these notes from oblivion, for many statements have been made about the expulsion of the six students which have misrepresented the case. Their expulsion produced a somewhat prolonged discussion, in the course of which the action of the University authorities was either justified or condemned. We content ourselves by recording Dr. Godley's opinion. He says: 'What is sufficiently clear is that the academic authorities of 1768 were animated by

[1] Godley's *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century*, 269–272.

a narrow, exclusive, and persecuting temper, and that social as well as religious intolerance was rampant. . . . Whatever the Wesleys may have done towards reformation of morals, they certainly had not broadened the sympathies of Oxford Heads of Houses: even though the Principal of the Hall himself pleaded, against his Tutor, for the acquittal and retention of the students.'[1]

On March 14 John Wesley set out from Bristol on his Northern journey. When he reached Evesham he found that 'all was hurry and confusion because of the election'; but, at the request of Edward Davies, the Vicar of Bengeworth, he preached in his church, which was at a short distance from the centre of the excitement. The next day, when he arrived at Pebworth, in Gloucestershire, he found that the vicar of the church had given notice on the previous Sunday that Wesley was to preach there on Friday. But the people were disappointed. The vicar had to explain that the squire of the parish had raised the objection that such preaching 'was contrary to the Canons.' So Wesley went on to Long Marston and preached there 'by the side of Mr. Eden's house.' Riding to Birmingham, he found that the tumult that had persisted there for many years had ceased. A 'resolute magistrate' had taken the rioters in hand, and had completely suppressed them. On Sunday, March 20, he preached on West Bromwich Heath, then 'a wild and desolate region.' We look in vain for Francis Asbury in the crowd; he was at work as an itinerant preacher in the Bedfordshire circuit. It is probable that the members of the little class he had kept together for several years would gather at the 'Heath' and listen to John Wesley on that day. In the evening he held an open-air service near the preaching-house in Wednesbury. He was on familiar ground once more. It was one of his old battle-fields, crowded with memories of assaults, sufferings, and victories.

On March 23, Wesley was in Wolverhampton. In 1763 a preaching-house had been built there; but it soon disappeared. Alexander Mather shall tell a story which should be remembered. Speaking of the mob that destroyed the first 'House' at Wolverhampton soon after it was built, he says:

> They had reigned here for a long time, insomuch that it was difficult for a Methodist to pass the streets. And now one could hardly appear

[1] *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century*, 273, 275.

in them, but at the hazard of his life. The rioters had broken most of their windows, and swore they would pull down their houses, and every preaching-house near. Hearing of this at Stroud, I rode over immediately, and found the whole country in terror, as they expected every night the mob from Wolverhampton to pull down the preaching-houses at Dudley, Darlaston, and Wednesbury, with the houses of the Methodists. They came first to Darlaston, a place long famous for rioting, hoping to meet with good encouragement. But a hog-butcher, who lived near the house, hearing the alarm, leaped out of bed, seized his cleaver, and, running out, swore death to the first that meddled with it. So unexpected a reception quite discouraged them, and made them run away faster than they came. Here we saw the good effect which the late revival had upon the town in general. There were few left who would either persecute themselves, or suffer others to do it.

But Wolverhampton itself was still in a flame. A friend who was to accompany me to the town had procured a pair of pocket-pistols, and offered me one. But I told him, 'No; I am in God's work, and trust to His protection. And you must return your pistols, or I cannot accept of your company.' He did so. When I came to the end of the town, the alarm was quickly spread. So that before we came into the main street we had company enough. But they were restrained, so that we received little abuse, farther than bad language. I immediately went to the justice, who granted a warrant; but the constable gave notice of it to the rioters, so that none was taken: some fled; some hid themselves; the rest set justice at defiance. This occasioned several neighbouring justices to fix a day for meeting in the town. When they met, several of the rioters were brought before them. Three were bound over to appear at Stafford, where all the magistrates gave attendance. The proof against the rioters was full: yet the honourable jury acquitted them all!

This gave them fresh spirits: so they hasted home with ribbons flying, and were saluted with bells and bonfires, in one of which they burned me and my friend in effigy. Our friends now found it more dangerous than ever to come to the town, or get to their houses. Before I left Stafford I waited on Lord D——, with Mr. Hayes, attorney; the person who prepared the mob, and himself made the first breach in the house. I told him plain, 'Either let Mr. Hayes rebuild the house, or we will try him for his life.' He promised it should be rebuilt in such a time; and it was built accordingly. So did God deliver us out of this complicated trouble. And all the time His work prospered.[1]

It was well that the Wolverhampton case came into the firm hands of Alexander Mather. Watching him, we have thought of the time when, as a boy of twelve, he stole away from his father's house at Brechin, and 'out of a childish frolic' joined a party of men in 1745 who were retreating with the 'Young Pretender.' He was at the battle of Culloden,

[1] *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ii. 182–183.

and escaped from the fight. When he got back to his father's house, the door was bolted against him. But his courage never forsook him. We are not surprised that, as a man, he did not fear a mob, nor the adverse verdict of a jury.

On March 25 John Wesley preached in 'the new House' at Burslem. He then went to Congleton, where there had been considerable disturbance. It had subsided. He gives the reason of the change in the following laconic sentence: 'It seems the behaviour of the Society in this town has convinced all the people in it but the curate, who still refuses to give the sacrament to any that will not promise to hear these preachers no more.' On Sunday, March 27, he was in Macclesfield, where he met with friendly clergymen. He attended the church services morning and afternoon. In the evening he preached in the open air to a great multitude. He speaks of 'thousands upon thousands'; he was delighted with the service and the attention of the crowd. A new era had commenced in Macclesfield. Owing, in great part, to the friendliness of the clergy, it became a town that stood high in John Wesley's affection.

The season of Easter was approaching. On Easter Day, April 3, John Wesley conducted a service, at eight o'clock in the morning, in Chester. He took his 'old stand' in the little square in which the church of St. Martin's-of-the-Ash stood. He would remember the day in 1752 when he attended the church and heard the Rev. John Baldwin denounce the rioters who had demolished the Methodist preaching-house.[1] It was a noble protest. In 1752 there were but few clergymen in England who would have denounced the outrage. But better times were gradually coming. On Easter Day, 1768, the little square was crowded, and Wesley was deeply impressed by the quietness of the congregation. During this visit to Chester he seems to have stayed with Francis Gilbert. A shadow had fallen on the home. Mary Gilbert, the young daughter of Nathaniel Gilbert, of Antigua, died in Chester on January 21, 1768, at the early age of seventeen. She left behind her a diary, which Wesley read during this visit. He was much impressed by it, and published an extract from it, with a preface 'To the Reader,' dated Liverpool, April 7, 1768.

[1] See *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism*, 236–237.

In this preface he expressed his high estimate of Mary Gilbert's character.[1]

Wesley was making his way to Scotland; but he stayed in Liverpool for a short time, as he found that the lay preachers and the members of the Society had done good work, not only in Liverpool, but also in the small towns in its neighbourhood. On April 6 he went to Wigan, and preached in a place near the middle of the town, which seems to have been a play-house. It was full. Most of the congregation 'were wild as wild might be'; yet none made the least disturbance. After the service he walked down the street. The people stared at him, yet none said an uncivil word. In the evening he had 'a huge congregation' at Liverpool, but 'some pretty, gay, fluttering things' did not behave with so much good manners as the mob at Wigan. This bad behaviour of the 'pretty things' was an exceptional occurrence in Liverpool. At subsequent services, and in meeting the Society, Wesley was greatly encouraged.

An incident in connexion with Wesley's visit to Liverpool casts light on the condition of Methodism in Lancashire at this time. When John Pawson was stationed in Liverpool, from 1766 to 1767, he, and several of the members of the Liverpool Society, had regularly visited Prescot and held services there. Their success attracted the attention of the Earl of Derby, whose country seat was near. He determined to stop these incursions into his territory. He forbade any inn-keeper to entertain the Methodist preachers. He ordered the constables to take down the names of those who attended the services, who were to be fined five shillings each. The principal inn-keeper in the town welcomed the preachers. The earl's head gardener, with great courage, avowed his Methodism. The earl's resolution was shaken. The head gardener was a valuable servant. So the earl consulted his wife, and suggested that 'they should not trouble about the man's religion.' But her ladyship insisted upon his dismissal. She soon found that the difficulty was not ended. Her maid, whom she had brought up from childhood, became a Methodist. It must have caused her ladyship some regret; but, firm in her convictions, she dismissed the maid.[2] It is no wonder

[1] It is interesting to note that in 1769 the little book was republished in Philadelphia.
[2] See John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 254, *note*.

that Prescot was visited by John Wesley. On Sunday, April 10, we find this record in his *Journal*: 'I rode to Prescot, eight miles from Liverpool, and came thither just as the church began. The vicar preached an excellent sermon on "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." After service many followed me to a vacant place, where we were tolerably sheltered from the cold wind. Fifty or sixty of our Liverpool friends also were there, who had walked over; and God made it both a solemn and a comfortable opportunity to many souls.'

On April 18 John Wesley crossed Solway Firth once more, this time without exciting adventure. The next day he reached Glasgow, where he stayed for two days, during which time he spoke to most of the members of the Society. He says: 'I doubt we have few Societies in Scotland like this. The greater part of those I saw not only have found peace with God, but continue to walk in the light of His countenance.' In three years a remarkable change had occurred in the condition of Methodism in Glasgow. In 1765 that sturdy Methodist preacher, Thomas Taylor, arrived in the town. He had travelled nearly six hundred miles to his new appointment. His description of his first service there gives us an idea of the experiences of an early Methodist pioneer preacher. The winter was at hand. He was in a strange land; there was no Society; no place to preach in; no friend to consult. He took a private lodging, and managed to let it be known that he would preach on the Green, 'a place of public resort, hard by the city.' He had arranged for a table to be carried to the Green, and at the appointed time he went there. He found two bakers' boys and two old women waiting to hear him. His soul sank within him; he turned to go away. He says: 'No one can tell, but they who have experienced it, what a task it is to stand in the open air to preach to nobody.' That statement will be eagerly endorsed by those who have tried the experiment. But Thomas Taylor, weary of waiting, mounted the table and began the singing, which he had entirely to himself. A few poor people kept creeping up to his stand; at length he had about two hundred hearers. For eleven or twelve weeks he continued his open-air work; at last success came. He tells

us that one great obstacle in his way was the publication of Hervey's *Eleven Letters*; their influence was such that it was a sufficient reason for every one to keep his distance, if the preacher was connected with John Wesley. Undaunted by difficulties, Thomas Taylor held on his way, and at length procured a room in which to preach. He gathered together a little Society, which kept continually increasing, and so the foundations of Methodism were 'well and truly' laid by this heroic man. We linger over Wesley's entry in his *Journal* on April, 1768. It not only reminds us of Thomas Taylor's heroism, but it brings Dr. Gillies once more into clear light. Wesley records his opinion that Gillies, 'that wise and good man,' had been of great service to the Methodist Society in Glasgow by encouraging the members, 'by all possible means to abide in the grace of God.'[1]

On April 26, John Wesley arrived in Aberdeen. He was again refreshed by his visit to the city. He was cheered by the condition of the Society, and found time for business, rest, and reading. On April 27 he made his will, a copy of which, made from the original in Wesley's own handwriting, is to be found in Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, iii. 15–16. Tyerman says that Wesley was without money; but he had books, &c.; and, to prevent quarrels after his death, he made more wills than one respecting their disposal. It is of interest to note that he bequeathed all his books that were for sale, with the sole right of reprinting them, after paying Charles Wesley's rent-charge upon them, to his three executors, in trust, the one moiety for the keeping of the children of travelling preachers at Kingswood School, who were to be chosen by the assistants at the yearly Conference, the other moiety to be used for the continual relief of the poor of the 'United Society in London.' Lastly, he bequeathed the residue of his books and goods to his wife, Mary Wesley. In view of the last bequest, it is interesting to note that his seal on this will represents a dove, having in its mouth an olive-branch.[2]

During this visit to Aberdeen Wesley seems to have had some leisure. He read William Tytler's *Historical and Critical Inquiry into the Evidence, &c., against Mary Queen of Scots.*

[1] *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, v. 28–33; John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 255.
[2] Wesley's last will was dated February 25, 1789.'

We know that his admiration of the Queen was great; the perusal of Tytler's book increased it. Not only so. It intensified his dislike of Queen Elizabeth. We have only to read the entry in his *Journal* to be certain of the latter fact. Dealing with the subject of the execution of the Queen of Scots, he says that Elizabeth was 'as just and merciful as Nero, and as good a Christian as Mahomet.' This sentence was written in that perilous condition of mind which is usually described as 'the heat of the moment.' While that disordering fervour lasts, it is well to reserve judgements on cases we have not fully considered. Wesley's abrupt verdicts on disputed cases sometimes come as a relief to us. A man who stands on high, above the reach of criticism, is apt to weary us. We welcome his descent to the level of ordinary humanity, and the coming of an opportunity when we can venture to question his infallibility. Ceasing to be an oracle, he becomes a companion.

Wesley's impetuous verdict on Queen Elizabeth's action evidently overlooks facts which find a prominent place in Dr. George Macaulay Trevelyan's recently published *History of England*. When Mary fled to England from Scotland, she found Elizabeth's kingdom in a distracted condition. In 1570 Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth, and the Jesuit mission was launched in England. Two years later, says Dr. Trevelyan, the Duke of Norfolk was executed for plotting with the agents of Philip, Alva, and the Pope to set Mary on the throne, this time as the puppet, not of France, but of Spain. She was to have Norfolk for her husband, the Pope undertaking to divorce her from Bothwell. The assassination of Elizabeth was henceforth a customary part of these discussions among the secular and religious chiefs of continental Europe, to whom the murder of heretics seemed a holy work. The Commons of England, for fifteen years after 1572, were continually petitioning for the execution of the Queen of Scots, and during the whole of that time, as Dr. Trevelyan says, 'Elizabeth, obeying her pacifist and royalist instincts, stood between her people and Mary's life.' Then in 1587 came the discovery by Walsingham of Babington's plot. One object of that plot was to secure the murder of Elizabeth; and it was the popular belief that Mary was acquainted with this design. Dr. Trevelyan says, 'Mary's prolonged existence

raged like the fever in men's blood, for, if she survived Elizabeth either she would become Queen and the work of the Reformation be undone, or else there would be the worst of civil wars, with the national sentiment in arms against the legitimate heir backed by the whole power of Spain. The prospect was too near and too dreadful to leave men time to pity a most unhappy woman. Parliament, people, and Ministers at length prevailed on Elizabeth to authorize the execution.'[1] If Wesley had been acquainted with all the facts of the case we think he would have omitted his comparison between Elizabeth, Nero, and Mahomet.

After visiting Edinburgh and other places in Scotland, Wesley crossed the border on May 18; a few days later he reached Newcastle. On May 25 and the three following days he was in Sunderland. He spent much of his time in taking down an account of the strange experiences of a woman who had been several times visited by 'apparitions.' His *Journal* contains a long account of his interview with her. The woman was well known in the neighbourhood. Wesley says that her character excluded all suspicion of fraud, and the nature of the circumstances excluded the possibility of a delusion. He admits that he was not able to comprehend some of the circumstances which she related, but he puts aside his failure with the question, 'What pretence have I, then, to deny well-attested facts, because I cannot comprehend them?' We are not so much concerned with the experiences of this Sunderland woman as with the impression their recital produced on Wesley, and with his statements on the subject of 'apparitions' and 'witches' which he makes.

On some questions Wesley was a man far in advance of his age. For instance, on January 2, 1768, he makes this entry in his *Journal*: 'At my leisure hours this week, I read Dr. Priestley's ingenious book on electricity. He seems to have accurately collected and well digested all that is known on that curious subject. But how little is that all! Indeed, the use of it we know; at least in some good degree. We know it is a thousand medicines in one; in particular, that it is the most efficacious medicine, in nervous disorders of every kind, which has ever yet been discovered. But if we aim at theory, we know nothing. We are soon "lost and bewildered in the

[1] Trevelyan's *History of England*, 337, 352–353.

fruitless search." ' That reveals Wesley's ' passion for the wonderful,' a characteristic which was strongly developed in him. He could not lift the heavy veil that hid the discoveries of our own day from him, but he was convinced that in after-years the search of the marvellous would be rewarded with splendid success.

But he was ' a man of the eighteenth century ' in his views concerning witchcraft and the possibility of ' apparitions.' It is true that in 1736 Parliament repealed the old statutes of England and Scotland which made witchcraft punishable with death.[1] But national convictions cannot be swept away in a moment by repeals of Acts of Parliament. There can be no doubt that the old views of the possibility of the existence of witches continued throughout this country. Those views were of long standing. If we go no further back than 1662 we find that, at the Bury St. Edmunds Assizes, held on March 10, 1661–2, Sir Matthew Hale, summing up in a witchcraft case, said : ' That there were such creatures as witches he made no doubt at all ; for, first, the Scriptures had affirmed so much ; secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such cases, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime.' [2] But, coming down to the eighteenth century, can we get any light on the opinions of intelligent people on the subject of the existence of witches? Sir Walter Scott, in *The Heart of Midlothian*, declares that wise and strong-minded men in the eighteenth century held that to disbelieve witchcraft or spectres was ' an undeniable proof of atheism.' The statement of Addison is well known. It appeared in the number of *The Spectator* published on July 14, 1711. It shows he was making an attempt to suspend his judgement until he heard more certain accounts about witches than any that had come to his knowledge. His state of mind is revealed at the close of his second paragraph. He says : ' In short, when I consider the question whether there are such persons in the world as those we call witches, my mind is divided between two opposite opinions, or, rather, to speak my thoughts freely, I believe in general that there is, and has been, such a thing as witchcraft ; but at the same time can give no credit to any

[1] Smollett's *History of England*, x. 452.

[2] See *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Sir Matthew Hale. His argument from Scripture is used by Wesley in his defence of his own opinions concerning the existence of witches.

particular instance of it.'[1] Carlyle throws light on the condition of belief in the eighteenth century. Speaking of Samuel Johnson, he says: 'Those evil-famed prejudices of his . . . that belief in witches and such-like, what were they but the ordinary beliefs of well-doing, well-meaning provincial Englishmen in that day?'[2] We cite these opinions in order to gain some idea of the divided state of opinion among well-educated people in the eighteenth century on witches and witchcraft, and so prevent hasty judgements on Wesley's position.

When we turn from witches to 'apparitions' we find it is not necessary to fix our thoughts exclusively on the eighteenth century. The age of belief in 'apparitions' has not passed away. It may be said that John Wesley never saw 'a ghost.' It is true that in his early days, when he was a boy at Charterhouse, he used to listen to letters from Epworth telling of the frisks of Old Jeffrey, the ghost that was supposed to haunt the rectory. He was much interested in the descriptions of the deeds of that disturber of the Wesley household. But in after-life his love of the marvellous made him a good listener to stories concerning 'apparitions.' He could not explain some of them, but he was governed by the rule that compels a wise man to abstain from rejecting everything he cannot understand. In stating some of the most perplexing, seemingly supernatural occurrences, he has a habit of giving the evidence he has collected, and then asking for the reader's verdict on the case. Still, there can be no doubt that he believed that other people had seen what he never saw, and that he found it hard to reject some of their statements. Is he to be blamed? Have we not in England to-day a Society for Psychical Research? On the first page of the Society's 'Constitution' the following note occurs: 'To prevent misconception, it is here expressly stated that membership of this Society does not imply the acceptance of any particular explanation of the phenomena, nor any belief as to the operation, in the physical world, of forces other than those recognized by physical science.' When we read the list of the officers and council in 1886, we find the names of men who then stood at the head of the physical scientists of England. Among other things, these men were prepared to examine evidence produced before them

[1] A similar suspense of judgement occurred in the case of Blackstone, who refers to the 'witch' question in his *Commentaries*, book iv., chapter iv.
[2] *Miscellanies*, iii. p. 101.

by persons who professed to have seen ' apparitions.' In that extraordinary book, *Phantasms of the Living*, there is a section on ' Borderland Cases ' which is crowded with interest. Instead of dismissing them with a laugh, these cases were scientifically considered and the evidence was carefully examined. We generally dispatch such cases with a look of superior wisdom ; but we are bound to say that we prefer the method adopted by the Society for Psychical Research. That method, we think, will ultimately prevail. Those who wonder at Wesley's interest in tales concerning ' apparitions,' and his hesitation to reject the experiences of other people in cases he found it hard to explain, may cease to blame him for listening to tales which we reserve for Christmas firesides, but are also deemed worthy of the investigation of the scientists of England.

## XVII

## AMERICA

JOHN WESLEY left Newcastle on June 13, 1768, and during the residue of the month he visited most of the Societies in Yorkshire. There is a gap in his *Journal* at this point; but on July 14, we know that he crossed over into Lincolnshire, and, after spending about ten days there, he went to Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield. After that he travelled to Madeley, and once more rested in the home of his friend, John Fletcher. After visiting him John Wesley made his way to South Wales. He visited some of the societies there; and then, on Saturday, August 13, he crossed The Passage and arrived in Bristol between eleven and twelve at midnight. The next morning he heard that his wife was dangerously ill in London. He took chaise immediately, and reached the Foundery before one o'clock on Monday morning. To his relief he found that the danger was over. He immediately returned to Bristol; he arrived, 'not at all tired,' in the afternoon. Then the next day he presided at the Conference.

The Bristol Conference of 1768 commenced on Tuesday, August 16, and closed on the following Friday. The ordinary business was transacted with great care. We note some items of interest. Among the preachers 'admitted' the name of Francis Asbury appears; and in the list of assistants we see that Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor find a place. Francis Asbury is appointed to Colchester, Richard Boardman to the Dales, and Joseph Pilmoor to Wales. In the Irish stations we note a peculiarity which often occurs during these early years. A preacher who is indicated by his initials, R. W., is appointed to Castlebar. We think we are right in deciding that the initials stand for Robert Williams. Those who are acquainted with Methodist world-history will understand why we point out these names. There is another aspect of the stations to which we must refer. Wesley's description of the

Conference is brief. He says: 'Oh, what can we do for more labourers? We can only cry to "the Lord of the harvest."' Do these words indicate that the considerable increase in the number of members in the 'home' circuits demanded an increase in the number of preachers; or had they a deeper meaning? The year before the number of members stood at 25,911; in 1768 there were 27,341 in the 'home' Societies. Wesley's cry may have possessed a double significance.

One of the conversations in this Conference should have special mention. For the first time the question was asked, 'Should itinerant preachers follow trades?' After much consideration the Conference decided against a practice that was quietly growing up. It will be enough to quote a few lines from the decision: 'If one preacher follows trade, so may twenty; so may every one. And if any of them trade a little, why not ever so much? Who can fix how far he should go? Therefore advise our brethren who have been concerned herein to give up all and attend to the one business. And we doubt not but God will recompense them a hundredfold, even in this world, as well as in the world to come. It is true, this cannot be done on a sudden. But it may between this and the next Conference.'

Notwithstanding the increase in membership the Conference was conscious that in many places the 'Work of God' seemed to stand still. The subject was seriously considered, and advices were given concerning the reading of religious books, the increase of field preaching, the early morning services, the formation of bands, the maintenance of discipline, the improvement of congregational singing, the observance of the quarterly fast days, the earnest seeking after the experience of Christian perfection, and the zealous care of the children in every large town. The last advice concerned 'keeping to the Church,' the familiar exhortations being repeated.

One part of the business of this Conference finds no record in the *Minutes*, but we know that a matter of supreme importance was introduced by Wesley. From time to time we have made suggestions concerning the migration of Irish Methodists to America. It seems certain that Wesley, up to 1768, did not know much or anything of the experiences of those who had found a home across the Atlantic. At last a letter came to him that lifted the veil. At this Conference he

read it to those who were assembled. We give the whole of the letter and reserve our comments on it.

New York, *April* 11, 1768.

Rev. and very Dear Sir,—I intended writing to you for several weeks past; but a few of us had a very material transaction in view. I therefore postponed writing, until I could give you a particular account thereof: This was the purchasing of ground for building a preaching-house upon, which by the blessing of God we have now concluded. But before I proceed, I shall give you a short account of the state of religion in this city. By the best intelligence I can collect, there was little either of the form or power of it, till Mr. Whitefield came over thirty years ago; and even after his first and second visit, there appeared but little fruit of his labours. But during his visit fourteen or fifteen years ago, there was a considerable shaking among the dry bones. Divers were savingly converted, and this work was much increased in his last journey, about fourteen years since, when his words were really as a hammer and as a fire. Most part of the adults were stir'd up: Great numbers prick'd to the heart, and by a judgement of charity, several found peace and joy in believing. The consequence of this work was the churches were crowded, and subscriptions raised for building new ones. Mr. Whitefield's example provoked most of the ministers to a much greater degree of earnestness. And by the multitudes of people, young and old, rich and poor, flocking to the churches, religion became an honourable profession. There was no outward cross to be taken up therein. Nay, a person who could not speak about the grace of God and the new birth was esteemed unfit for genteel company. But in a while, instead of pressing forward and growing in grace (as he exhorted them) the generality were pleading for the remains of sin, and the necessity of being in darkness. They esteem'd their opinions as the very essentials of Christianity and regarded not holiness either of heart or life.

The above appears to me to be a genuine account of the state of religion in New York eighteen months ago, when it pleased God to rouse up Mr. *Embury* to employ his talent (which for several years had been as it were hid in a napkin), by calling sinners to repentance, and exhorting believers to let their light shine before men. He spoke at first only in his own house. A few were soon collected together and joined in a little Society; chiefly his own countrymen, *Irish*. In about three months after, Brother *White* and Brother *Sause* from Dublin joined them. They then rented an empty room in their neighbourhood, which was in the most infamous street of the city, adjoining the barracks. For some time few thought it worth their while to hear. But God so ordered it by His providence that, about fourteen months ago, Captain *Webb*, barrack-master at Albany (who was converted about three years since at Bristol), found them out and preached in his regimentals. The novelty of a man preaching in a scarlet coat soon brought greater numbers to hear than the room could contain. But his doctrines were quite new to the hearers; for he told them

point-blank, 'that all their knowledge and profession of religion was not worth a rush, unless their sins were forgiven, and they had the witness of God's Spirit with theirs that they were the children of God.' This strange doctrine, with some peculiarities in his person, made him soon be taken notice of; and obliged the little Society to look out for a larger house to preach in. They soon found a place that had been built for a rigging-house, 60 ft. in length and 18 in breadth.

About this period Mr. *Webb*, whose wife's relations lived at *Jamaica*, on *Long Island*, took a house in that neighbourhood, and began to preach in his own house, and several other places on *Long Island*. Within six months, about twenty-four persons received justifying grace. Near half of them whites, the rest negroes. While Mr. *Webb*, to borrow his own phrase, was 'Felling the trees on *Long Island*,' brother *Embury* was exhorting all who attended on Thursday evenings, and Sunday morning and evenings, at the rigging-house, to flee from the wrath to come. His hearers began to increase and some gave heed to his report, about the time the gracious providence of God brought me safe to New York, after a very favourable passage of six weeks from *Plymouth*. It was the 26th day of *October* last when I arrived, recommended to a person for lodging. I inquired of my host (who was a very religious man) if any Methodists were in *New York*: he informed me there was one Captain *Webb*, a strange sort of man, who lived on *Long Island*, and sometimes preached at one *Embury's* at the rigging-house. In a few days I found out *Embury*. I soon found what spirit he was of, and that he was personally acquainted with you and your doctrines, and had been a Helper in *Ireland*. He had formed two classes, one of the men and another of the women, but had never met the Society apart from the congregation, although there were six or seven men, and about the same number of women, who had a clear sense of their acceptance in the Beloved.

You will not wonder at my being agreeably surprised in meeting with a few here who have been, and desire again to be, in connexion with you. God only knows the weight of the affliction I felt, in leaving my native country. But I have reason now to conclude God intended all for my good.

Mr. *Embury* has lately been more zealous than formerly; the consequence of which is, that he is more lively in preaching; and his gifts as well as graces are much increased. Great numbers of serious people came to hear God's word as for their lives. And their numbers increased so fast, that our house for this six weeks past would not contain the half of the people.

We had some consultations how to remedy this inconvenience, and Mr. *Embury* proposed renting a lot of ground for twenty-one years, and to exert our utmost endeavours to collect as much money as to build a wooden tabernacle. A piece of ground was proposed: the ground rent was agreed for, and the lease was to be executed in a few days. We, however, in the meantime, had two several days for fasting and prayer, for the direction of God, and His blessing on our proceeding: and Providence opened such a door as we had no expectation of. A

young man, a sincere Christian, and constant hearer, though not joined in Society, would not give anything towards this house, but offered £10 to buy a lot of ground, went of his own accord to a lady who had two lots to sell, on one of which there is a house that rents for £18 per annum. He found the purchase-money of the two lots was £600, which she was willing should remain in the purchaser's hands on good security. We called once more upon God for His direction, and resolved to purchase the whole. There are eight of us, who are joint purchasers; among whom Mr. *Webb* and Mr. *Lupton* are men of property. I was determined the house should be on the same footing as the Orphan House at *Newcastle*, and others in *England*: but as we were ignorant how to draw the deeds, we purchased for us and our heirs, until a copy of the writings from England was sent us, which we desire may be sent by the first opportunity.

Before we began to talk of building, the Devil and his children were very peaceable; but since this affair took place, many ministers have cursed us in the name of the Lord, and laboured with all their might to shut up their congregations from assisting us. But He that sitteth in heaven laughed them to scorn. Many have broke through, and given their friendly assistance. We have collected above £100 more than our contributions; and have reason to hope in the whole we shall have £200 more: so that unless God is pleased to raise up friends, we shall yet be at a loss. I believe Mr. *Webb* and *Lupton* will borrow or advance £200 rather than the building should not go forward; but the interest of money here is a great burden, which is seven *per cent.* Some of our brethren proposed writing to you for a collection in *England*, but I was averse to this, as I well knew our friends there are overburdened already. Yet so far I would earnestly beg; if you would intimate our circumstances to particular persons of ability, perhaps God would open their hearts to assist this infant Society, and contribute to the first preaching-house on the original *Methodist* plan in all America. But I shall write no more on this head.

There is another point far more material, and in which I must importune your assistance, not only in my own name, but in the name of the whole Society. We want an able, experienced preacher; one who has both gifts and graces necessary for the work. God has not despised the day of small things. There is a real work in many hearts, by the preaching of Mr. *Webb* and Mr. *Embury*: but although they are both useful, and their hearts in the work, they want many qualifications necessary for such an undertaking, where they have none to direct them. And the progress of the gospel here depends much on the qualifications of the preachers.

I have thought of Mr. *Helton*; for, if possible, we must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian; one whose heart and soul are in the work: and I doubt not, but by the goodness of God, such a flame would be soon kindled as would never stop, until it reached the great South Sea. We may make many shifts to evade temporal inconveniences; but we cannot *purchase* such a preacher as I have described. Dear sir, I entreat you for the good of thousands, to use

your utmost endeavours to send one over. I would advise him to take shipping at *Bristol, Liverpool,* or *Dublin,* in the month of *July,* or early in *August*; by embarking at this season, he will have fine weather in his passage, and probably arrive here in the month of September. He will see with his own eyes before winter what progress the gospel has made. With respect to the money for payment of a preacher's passage over, if they could not procure it, we would sell our coats and shirts and pay it.

I most earnestly beg an interest in your prayers, and trust you and many of our brethren will not forget the Church in this wilderness.

This letter was written by a layman named Thomas Taylor, who was known to Wesley. He had migrated to America, and had joined the Methodist Society in New York. Charles Atmore, in the Appendix to his *Methodist Memorial,* published in 1802, explains its discovery. Christopher Hopper died in that year. Atmore, in examining his papers, found the letter, and inserted it in the Appendix. Students of the history of American Methodism will welcome the light it sheds on a subject of exceptional importance.[1]

The hope that some preacher would be sent out to America by the Conference of 1768 was not fulfilled. The selection of the man was not such a simple matter as Thomas Taylor seems to have thought. John Helton was out of the question. But during the year the subject filled Wesley's mind and was also considered by some who had heard the letter read in Conference. Wesley arranged that an appeal should be made for the financial aid that was needed by those who were responsible for the erection of the preaching-house in New York. We know that he sent a copy of Thomas Taylor's letter to Robert Costerdine, the 'assistant' in the Sheffield circuit. He gave him permission to read it 'publicly on any Sunday he liked,' and make an appeal for help. It is possible that the letter found among Christopher Hopper's papers was intended for a similar purpose.

On Wednesday, August 24, while Wesley was visiting the Societies in Cornwall, Lady Huntingdon's College at Trevecca was opened. George Whitefield preached the dedication sermon. On the following Sunday he addressed a congregation of some thousands in the court before the College. It is interesting to note that John Fletcher was chosen as president,

[1] The Appendix to Atmore's *Methodist Memorial* is not well known. We are indebted to the Rev. John Elsworth for the use of his copy.

and Joseph Easterbrook as the first master. The latter did not remain more than a few months. He became the Vicar of Temple Church in Bristol, and the Ordinary of Newgate prison in that city. He was a staunch supporter of the Methodists. The changes wrought in Bristol since the days when Charles Wesley and the Kingswood colliers were repelled from the sacrament in Temple Church come out from the mists of the past, and increase our gratitude for the advent of an ever-broadening Christian charity in Bristol.[1]

The rest of the year 1768 was crowded with work. We can only touch on one of its incidents. On Friday, October 14, John Wesley was in Bristol. He dined with Dr. Wrangel, one of the King of Sweden's chaplains, who had spent several years in Pennsylvania. Wesley says: 'His heart seemed to be greatly united to the American Christians, and he strongly pleaded for our sending some of our preachers to help them, multitudes of whom are as sheep without a shepherd.' In a note the editor of John Wesley's *Journal* draws attention to letters from Dr. Wrangel which appear in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1784. In the first Dr. Wrangel describes his work as chaplain to the King of Sweden, and gives details showing that, through correspondence, sermons, and books, Wesley was influencing public opinion in that country. The statement suggests the widening of the sweep of Wesley's influence, and carries our thoughts onward to the Methodist mission that was established in Stockholm in the next century. But, returning to the appeal of Dr. Wrangel for Wesley's help in the case of the Americans, we note that on October 30, 1768, the Methodist preaching-house in John Street, New York, was opened for public worship, the sermon being preached by Philip Embury.

[1] For the opening of the College at Trevecca, see Williams's *Welsh Calvinistic Methodism*, 133–134; for Temple Church, see *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 31–33.

## XVIII

## NEW YORK

THOMAS TAYLOR'S letter gives considerable assistance to those who wish to ascertain the facts concerning the introduction of Methodism into the American colonies. It is a light shining in a somewhat dark place. It is well known that what is called 'the question of priority' has been discussed in the past, and still continues to be discussed in the United States. We hesitate to intrude into this 'domestic controversy'; but, in considering Thomas Taylor's letter, there are points which compel our attention. We are not satisfied with his statement concerning the conduct of Philip Embury during the years that immediately followed his arrival in America. Taylor's letter is dated April 11, 1768. In it he says that, eighteen months before it was written, 'it pleased God to rouse up Mr. Embury to employ his talent (which for several years had been, as it were, hid in a napkin) by calling sinners to repentance, and exhorting believers to let their light shine before men.' That statement has been repeated, in varying forms, until the present day. If it means anything, it implies that from 1760 to the middle of 1766 Embury had not only ceased to preach to sinners, but had given up exhorting believers. It is impossible to accept the latter part of this accusation. Dr. Lewis R. Streeter, in his *Review in a New Light of An Age-Long Question*, has produced evidence which controverts it. But, if 'calling sinners to repentance' means preaching to them in the open air, or in rooms set apart in New York for public worship, the statement may be justified. It was not until about October, 1766, that Embury preached his first sermon in his own hired house. His abstinence from public preaching demands an explanation; and that explanation can only be given by those who are acquainted with the condition of New York at the time when Embury migrated from Ireland.

In dealing with the subject of the questionable conduct of men, it is necessary to see the character of the times in which they lived. We must construct the historic background ; and that takes more time than the utterance of a condemnation. In trying to see New York as it was in 1760 we shall have to go back to May, 1626. It was then that a band of Dutch colonists, under the leadership of Peter Minuit, a Westphalian, landed on Manhattan Island, at the mouth of the River Hudson. We will place ourselves under the guidance of Theodore Roosevelt, one of the Presidents of the United States, in our attempt to describe the events which followed this landing.[1] Roosevelt says that Manhattan Island was then ' a mass of tangled, frowning forest, fringed with melancholy marshes, which near the present site of Canal Street approached so close together from either side that they almost made another small island of the southern end.' Manhattan Island was then in the possession of the Indians. Minuit interviewed them. The result was that he purchased the island for the sum of sixty guilders, or about twenty-four dollars ! During the summer a little town was built, which was defended by a fort. Roosevelt says that ' the settlers huddled near the fort in their squalid huts ; while they closely watched their cattle, which were in imminent danger from wolves, bears, and panthers, whenever they strayed into the woodland. This little collection of huts received the name of New Amsterdam.' Such is the first clear view we get of the beginning of the future city of New York.

The Dutchmen prospered. In May, 1653, the little town had so increased in size and importance that, under the governorship of that gallant soldier, Peter Stuyvesant, it was incorporated as a city. Its prosperity had attracted a mixed population. The Dutch formed the ruling and the most numerous class of the inhabitants ; but, as Roosevelt says, ' a great many English, both from Old and New England, had come in ; while the French Huguenots were still more plentiful—and, it may be mentioned parenthetically, formed, as everywhere else in America, without exception, the most valuable of all the immigrants. There were numbers of Walloons, not a few Germans, and representatives of so many other nations

[1] See the volume on *New York* in the ' Historic Towns ' series, edited by Freeman and Hunt, and published by Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. in 1891. A volume on *Boston*, written by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, also appears in this valuable series

that no less than eighteen different languages and dialects were spoken in the streets.'

When England and Holland were at war with each other the Dutch inhabitants of New Amsterdam feared an invasion. For the greater part of 1664 they were at peace; then, in September, suddenly a fleet of three or four English frigates, and a force of several hundred land troops, appeared in the harbour. They were soon joined by troops of New Englanders from Long Island. Colonel Richard Nicolls was in command of the invaders. He demanded the immediate surrender of the city and province. Stuyvesant wished to fight even against such odds, but the citizens refused to support him. New Amsterdam passed into the hands of the English without a gun being fired in its defence. Though the two countries were at peace, this expedition against New Amsterdam occurred under the patronage of the Duke of York, afterwards King James II, and the name of the city was changed in his honour. It is no wonder that Roosevelt heartily denounces the Duke of York and all who acted with him in this extraordinary transaction.

The conquered province had been 'patented' to the Duke of York, and Nicolls acted as his agent. The form of Government was changed. A sheriff, aldermen, a mayor, and justices, were elected, but vested rights were interfered with as little as possible. During the Dutch occupation a church had been built. After the capture of New Amsterdam the feeling was so friendly that for some time the English service was held in it. As was inevitable, the question of the forced occupation of the city was raised when the Peace of Breda was under discussion in 1667. But the negotiators decided that New York should remain in the hands of the English. The Dutch were not content with this decision. In July, 1673, they recaptured the city, and ruled it for a little more than a year. In November, 1674, they surrendered it. The name of New York was resumed, and the province became one of the English colonies in America.[1]

It is interesting to watch the growth of the population of New York. Roosevelt says that in 1710 the city contained some six thousand inhabitants; in 1750 the number had increased to over twelve thousand; and at the outbreak of

[1] Roosevelt's *New York*, 44, 47.

the Revolution—that is, in 1776—it had reached nearly twenty thousand. It was a smaller town than either Boston or Philadelphia. It is well to keep these figures in mind. They help us to see more clearly the New York of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Speaking of the Europeans who came to the city during the first forty years of its existence, Roosevelt says that they represented almost every grade of old-world society. Then he gives us an insight into the character of the settlers. He says:

> Many of these pioneers were men of as high character and standing as ever took part in founding a new settlement; but, on the other hand, there were plenty of others to the full as vicious and worthless as the worst immigrants who have come hither during the present century. Many imported bond-servants and apprentices, both English and Irish, of criminal or semi-criminal tendencies, escaped to Manhattan from Virginia and New England, and, once here, found congenial associates from half the countries of continental Europe. There thus existed from the start a low, shiftless, evil class of whites in our population; while even beneath their squalid ranks lay the herd of brutalized black slaves. It may be questioned whether seventeenth-century New Amsterdam did not include quite as large a proportion of undesirable inhabitants as nineteenth-century New York.[1]

Roosevelt's description of the character of some of the seventeenth-century settlers in New Amsterdam could be made to apply to the inhabitants of other large cities, far away from the American seaboard, in the eighteenth century. But we accept the aid of his description of the town in order to get light on some circumstances of importance. The presence of a dangerous class in New York was soon shown when the city comes into clearer view in the early years of the eighteenth century.

Roosevelt's suggestion of the presence of 'brutalized black slaves' arrests us. The negro slaves formed a very large proportion of the inhabitants of New York. Sometimes they amounted to nearly half of the population. During the first half of the eighteenth century they were very numerous, and were, for the most part, of African birth, being fresh from the holds of the Guinea slavers. Roosevelt describes them as 'brutal, ignorant savages'; he says that the whites were in constant dread of a servile insurrection. He continues:

> In 1712 this fear was justified, at least partially, for in that year the slaves formed a wild, foolish plot to destroy all the whites; and

[1] Roosevelt's *New York*, 29.

some forty of them attempted to put it into execution. Armed with every kind of weapon, they met at midnight in an orchard on the outskirts of the town, set fire to a shed, and assaulted those who came running up to quell the flames. In this way they killed nine men and wounded some others, before the alarm was given and the soldiers from the fort, approaching, put them to flight. They fled to the forests in the northern part of the island; but the militia, roused to furious anger, put sentries at the fords, and then hunted down the renegade negroes like wild beasts. Six, in their despair, slew themselves; and twenty-one of those who were captured were shot, hung, or burned at the stake.

This attempted revolt greatly increased the uneasiness of the white inhabitants, and was largely responsible for the ferocious panic of fear, rage, and suspicion into which they were thrown by the discovery of another plot among the negroes in 1741. During this panic the citizens went almost mad with cruel terror, and did deeds which make a dark stain on the pages of New York's history—deeds which almost parallel those done in the evil days of the Salem witchcraft persecution, save that in the New York case there really was some ground for the anger and resentment of the persecutors. Exactly how much ground there was, however, it is impossible to say. There is no doubt that many of the slaves, especially among those of African birth, were always vaguely hoping for, and perhaps planning for, the destruction of their masters, and that some of the bolder and more brutal spirits did actually indulge in furtive incendiarism, outrage, and attempted murder; but there is no reason to suppose that the great mass of the blacks were ever engaged in the plot, or that there was ever any real danger of a general outbreak. Slave-owners, however, live always under the hair-hung sword; they know that they can take no risks, and that their very existence depends on the merciless suppression of every symptom of hostile discontent.[1]

During March, 1741, there broke out in New York so many fires in quick succession that it seemed certain they were of incendiary origin; and the conduct of a few of the slaves greatly excited the suspicions of the citizens. At the same time the 'indented' servant-girl of a low tavern-keeper had been arrested, together with her master and mistress and two negroes, for complicity in a robbery. Rewards having been offered to any person who would give information concerning the origin of the fires, this girl asserted that her master and mistress and a number of the poor, semi-criminal whites, together with a multitude of the blacks, were all engaged therein. Many of the ignorant slaves, when arrested, strove in their terror to save their own necks by corroborating her

[1] Roosevelt's *New York*, 98–100.

statements. Roosevelt says that the whole of New York went into a mad panic, and scores of people were imprisoned and put to death on the strength of these accusations. Fourteen negroes were burned at the stake, twenty were hanged, and seventy-one were transported. Twenty whites were imprisoned; four were executed. Among the latter was a Catholic priest, named Ury, who was condemned for complicity in the negro plot, and for the crime of administering the rites of his religion. Roosevelt continues: 'This added the touch of cruel religious bigotry which alone was wanting to complete the gloom of the picture. At last, glutted with victims, the panic subsided, leaving behind it the darkest page in our annals.'[1]

Those who are acquainted with the events which followed the passing of the Stamp Act by the English Parliament in 1764 will admit the truth of Roosevelt's assertion that 'colonial New York was always a turbulent little town.'[2] He gives a vivid account of the riots that then took place. Those who have read Sir Erskine May's description of the introduction and passing of the Stamp Act by the Parliament will probably accept his denunciation of it; especially of the manner of its application to the British Colonies in America. It will be enough to say that the rioting in New York, and the protests of Americans and Englishmen, resulted in its withdrawal.[3] This unfortunate event increases the light which enables us to see the New York into which Philip Embury and his companions entered when they migrated from Ireland.

When considering Philip Embury's conduct during the years immediately following the time of his arrival in New York, we must realize the disturbed condition of the city, and the readiness of a large part of its inhabitants to break into riot when provoked by the action of those who had recently arrived from over the sea. Notwithstanding the condemnation contained in Taylor's letter, we think that Embury and his Irish companions acted with wisdom in refraining from commencing an open-air campaign against the sinners in New York. Instead of so doing, they became worshippers and communicants at Trinity Church. That church was erected in 1696, and for many years it was the principal

[1] In a footnote on p. 101 Roosevelt says that 'it is barely possible that Ury was a non-juring priest instead of a Catholic.'
[2] Roosevelt's *New York*, 114.
[3] See May's *Constitutional History of England*, ii. 356–357.

gathering-place of the members of the Church of England.[1] It must be remembered that, under the laws then existing in New York, only a small number of religious denominations were permitted to erect places of worship in the city. For many years Dutchmen and Roman Catholics had possessed chapels. As time went on the privilege was extended to the members of the Church of England. They had been accustomed to assemble in the garrison chapel but at last Trinity Church was built. It is needless to say that in 1760 the Methodists were unknown in the city. Much had to happen before religious liberty was extended to them. As the majority of the Methodists in England and Ireland at that time considered themselves members of the Church of England, it was natural that Embury and his companions should join the congregation worshipping in Trinity Church.

When Taylor accused Embury of the guilt of 'hiding his talent in a napkin,' he seems to have forgotten that the emigrants had been driven from their home in Ireland by the threat of coming poverty. They had crossed the water because they believed that in America remunerative work was to be found, and that it was easy to get employment that would help them and their families to live. Dr. Streeter, who was for several years the minister of John Street Chapel, in New York, has collected valuable information concerning the movements of Philip Embury during the period immediately after his landing. He had been a carpenter in Ireland. It is probable that he soon found there was more than a sufficient supply of carpenters in New York. His mind turned in other directions. Dr. Streeter shows that, after a few months of residence in the city, he inserted an advertisement in four issues of *Weyman's Weekly New York Gazette*. The first appeared on March 16, 1761. It indicates the fact that he intended to start a school in which 'reading, writing, and arithmetic, in English' were to be taught. A new school-house was being erected in Little Queen Street, 'next door to the Lutheran minister's.' The advertisement gives information of other subjects that were to be taught in the school by Embury and his brother. We have no reliable information as to the experiences of these two schoolmasters.

[1] In 1777 the original Trinity Church was burned down. Its destruction was supposed to have been caused by the action of rioters.

When Philip Embury was in Ireland he had been much impressed by the common talk about the advantages of America as a flax-growing and linen-manufacturing country. He conversed with other Palatines on the subject; and before the migration occurred a company had been tentatively formed. When the Palatines arrived in New York this project was not forgotten. Sites were inspected; and on February 1, 1763, a petition was forwarded to the Governor of the New York Colony asking for a grant of Crown lands on which the linen business might be conducted. The petition was signed by twenty-five persons, eight of whom had been members of Embury's class in Ireland. The petitioners described themselves, with one exception, as natives of the Kingdom of Ireland; all of them declared themselves to be 'of the Established Church of England.' The piece of ground specified in this petition was found to be unsuitable, so another petition was forwarded asking for a more suitable tract of land. In response, a grant of eight thousand acres was made to the company on March 13, 1765. Dr. Streeter says that all documents relating to the transactions of the company are 'on file at Albany.'[1] It is clear that during these years Philip Embury was a busy man; also that he remained in close association with the members of the class of which he had been the leader in Ireland. Dr. Streeter says that during those six eventful years he met them constantly 'in class.'

In Thomas Taylor's letter we have no account of the circumstances which led to the 'rousing up' of Philip Embury and the commencement of his preaching in New York. We have often regretted his silence. Many years elapsed before American writers of Methodist history faced the question. Those who are acquainted with their statements are aware that they reveal a considerable divergence of opinion on this critical subject. One of the earliest writers of the history of Methodism in America was Dr. Nathan Bangs. In 1818 he preached and published the 'dedicatory sermon' when the second John Street Church in New York was opened. In 1838 he published the first volume of his *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*. In each he makes reference to the commencement of Embury's preaching in New York. It is, however, difficult to harmonize some of the statements concerning

[1] Dr. Streeter's *Review of the Question of Priority*, 14–16.

the circumstances which led to the 'rousing up' of Philip Embury which he makes in the *Sermon* and the *History*. We will take the *History* as expressing his matured opinions. He says:

> We have already stated that the first Methodist Society was established in the city of New York in the year 1766. This was done by a small number of pious emigrants from Ireland who, previously to their removal to this, had been members of a Methodist Society in their own country. Among their number was Mr. Philip Embury, a local preacher. Though they had been attached to Wesleyan Methodism at home, it appears that, on their arrival here, they came very near making 'shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.' They were strangers in a strange land; and, not finding any pious acquaintances with whom they could associate, they gradually lost their relish for divine things, and sunk away into the spirit of the world. In this state of lukewarmness and worldly-mindedness they were found the next year on the arrival of another family from Ireland, among whom was a pious 'mother in Israel,' to whose zeal in the cause of God they were all indebted for the revival of the spirit of piety among them. Soon after her arrival she ascertained that those who had preceded her had so far departed from their 'first love' as to be mingling in the frivolities and sinful amusements of life. The knowledge of this painful fact aroused her indignation, and, with a zeal which deserves commemoration, she suddenly entered the room where they were assembled, seized the pack of cards with which they were playing, and threw them into the fire. Having thus unceremoniously destroyed their 'playthings,' she addressed herself to them in language of expostulation; and, turning to Mr. Embury, she said, 'You must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell together, and God will require our blood at your hands!' This pointed appeal had its intended effect, in awaking his attention to the perilousness of their condition. Yet, as if to excuse himself from the performance of an obvious duty, he tremblingly replied: 'I cannot preach, for I have neither a house nor congregation.' 'Preach in your own house first, and to our own company,' was the reply. Feeling the responsibility of his situation, and not being able any longer to resist the importunities of his reprover, he consented to comply with her request; and accordingly preached his first sermon, 'in his own hired house,' to five persons only. This, it is believed, was the first Methodist sermon ever preached in America.[1]

In comparing the statements of the *Sermon* and the *History* we find that in each Dr. Bangs says that 1765 was the year when Embury arrived in America. There is now a consensus of opinion that he sailed from Ireland in 1760, Barbara Heck

[1] Bangs's *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, i. 47, 48.

being with him in the same ship.[1] This mistake makes us cautious when we examine his description of 'the card-party,' with which we are chiefly concerned. In the *Sermon* he said that Barbara Heck, after destroying the cards, went to Embury's house and entreated him to call a meeting, and preach to the emigrants who had just arrived. In the *History* he tells us that Embury was in the room with the card-players, and that Barbara Heck turned to him and delivered her rebuke in their presence. In comparing the statements of the incident in the *Sermon* and the *History* it is clear that in this point they are contradictory. Is it possible to discover the reason of the change which Dr. Bangs made in his *History* in the description of the card-playing incident? We suggest that in a note which appears in the *History* we may find a solution of our difficulty. In that note he speaks of a 'pious woman' whose name was *Hick*—evidently a mistake for *Heck*. Describing the part which Barbara Heck took in suggesting the erection of the first Methodist chapel which was built in New York, he says:

> The name of this pious woman was Hick, the mother of the late Paul Hick, who became a member of the Methodist E. Church in his youth, and was subsequently a class-leader and trustee, in which offices he continued until near the close of life, and finally died in the triumphs of faith in the seventy-fourth year of his age. He has children and grandchildren now members of the church in the city of New York. He has often conversed with the writer respecting the circumstances and incidents of these early days of Methodism, with much apparent delight and gratitude. . . . Several of the facts above narrated were received by the writer from Mr. Hick and other members of the family.

It seems clear that Dr. Bangs, after making his statement in his *Sermon*, listened to the legends of the descendants of the Heck family and altered his version of the card-party incident. That he made a mistake is clear. We have read descriptions of the 'party' in books written by the leading historians of American Methodism, and, so far as we know, Dr. Bangs stands alone in his statement concerning the presence of Embury in the room occupied by the card-players. We have dwelt on this incident because it was necessary, in justice to him, to ascertain the facts of the case. He has been described as 'a timid man.' He certainly acted with caution, which is

[1] See p. 90, *ante*.
[2] Bangs's *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, i. 51, *note*.

sometimes mistaken for timidity. But, being convinced of the duty of resuming his work of preaching, he discharged that duty with an unflinching courage.

Thomas Taylor's letter is especially valuable, as it throws light on the migrations of the New York Methodists from room to room until they found a resting-place in John Street. Each move must have caused them anxiety, for it is clear that some of them were aware of a fact we have already mentioned. Methodism was not recognized by the laws of New York ; and the attempt to hold public services in buildings which were unprotected by the regulations of the city was a dangerous experiment. After the Methodists ceased to meet for worship in Philip Embury's dwelling-house they rented an empty room in Barrack Street—' the most infamous street of the city.' It was in this room that the congregation one day was disturbed by the entrance of a military officer. They looked at him with suspicion. Even when Philip Embury was praying some of them glanced at the intruder. They were astonished at his devoutness. Their fears began to subside. At the close of the service anxieties vanished. The visitor was Lieutenant Webb, who had sought for the Methodists that he might join in their worship and help them in their work. We know the service that he rendered in the ' Room,' the ' rigging-loft,' in John Street Chapel, and elsewhere in America. But the danger we have indicated still threatened the Methodists. Some of the pictures of the old Methodist chapel in John Street give a detail of the building which is liable to be overlooked. In the first volume of Dr. Bangs's *History* it stands out clearly. It is a small chimney which rises at the back of the chapel. Dr. Abel Stevens explains its meaning. He says, ' Dissenters were not yet allowed to erect " regular churches " in the city ; the new building was therefore provided with " a fireplace and chimney," to avoid " the difficulty of the law." ' It is probable that some people thought that a more effective defence for the time being was the fact that the Mayor of New York had contributed to the fund that was raised for the erection of the chapel.[1]

Looking across the Atlantic, we have watched the beginning of a Church that now numbers its members by millions. While we have been describing the origin of Methodism on the

[1] Stevens's *History of American Methodism*, 37, English ed.

continent of America we have often seen a gleam of light that shines in an American island. It comes from Antigua. That island remained for many years uninhabited owing to the scarcity of fresh water. Then, in 1632, twelve years after the Pilgrim Fathers first set foot on Plymouth Rock, Englishmen landed in Antigua, and conquered the difficulty that had kept it barren and desolate. They settled there, and turned the wilderness into a fruitful field. But our chief thought has rested on Nathaniel Gilbert. He left London and returned to Antigua in the autumn of 1759. He began his Methodist work there at once. That work must not be forgotten when we are considering the much-discussed question of the introduction of Methodism into America. One fact is beyond all controversy. The first pioneers of Methodism in Antigua and the English colonies of the American mainland were laymen.[1]

[1] See *Arminian Magazine*, 1780, 330; Tyerman's *John Wesley*, ii. 299.

# XIX

## MISSIONARIES SENT TO AMERICA

On January 9, 1769, John Wesley spent 'a comfortable and profitable hour' with George Whitefield. They talked about the former times, 'and called to mind the manner wherein God prepared them for a work which it had not then entered into their hearts to conceive.' On February 27 Wesley had 'one more agreeable conversation with his old friend.' He says that Whitefield's 'soul seemed to be vigorous but his body was sinking apace.' His opinion was that unless God interposed with His mighty hand Whitefield must soon finish his labours.[1] These interviews have pathetic interest. On September 4, 1769, Whitefield went on board the *Friendship* for his last voyage to America. Wesley saw him no more. On Sunday, September 30, 1770, he died at Newbury Port, near Boston. When Wesley received the news he must have called to mind the 'comfortable hours' he had spent with his old friend in London. Gradually the comrades of former days were passing away; instead of bemoaning them he thanked God that their warfare was accomplished and the victory had been won.

On January 17 Wesley rode to Chesham, in Buckinghamshire. He there met with a man whom he came to admire and love. The Methodist 'Room' at Chesham was small and would not contain the expected crowd. The difficulty was met by Thomas Spooner, the Dissenting minister, who offered to give him the use of his 'meeting-house.' Wesley had not quite overcome his hesitation to preach in the chapels of Dissenters, but he could not resist the 'offer of that friendly man, Mr. Spooner'—as he calls him. So he preached in the 'meeting-house' to a great congregation. At the end of the month he returned to London. On February 6 he had an interview with 'a venerable woman' who talked to him about

[1] Whitefield preached at the Leeds Conference held in 1769.

ancient times. She was nearly ninety years of age, but retained her health, her senses, her understanding, and even her memory to a good degree. Wesley says: 'In the last century she belonged to my grandfather Annesley's congregation, at whose house her father and she used to dine every Thursday; and whom she remembers to have frequently seen in his study, at the top of the house, with his window open, and without any fire, winter or summer.' Wesley was awaking to the interest of the history of his Nonconformist ancestors, and this interview must have given him special pleasure. Thomas Spooner's kindness and the 'venerable woman's' story must have increased his understanding of the character of the English Dissenters.

On Sunday, February 19, Wesley was in Norwich, the city which had caused him so much anxiety. It is significant that he held a sacramental service there. About one hundred 'serious communicants' were present. Then in the evening he went into the open air and preached to the crowd. He tells us that it was a sight which had not been seen at Norwich for many years. Those who have followed our descriptions of the fortunes of Methodism in Norwich will note both these facts and will accept them as signs of the coming of better days.

On Tuesday, March 21, John Wesley embarked on board the *King George*, at Parkgate for Ireland. His visit to Ireland lasted until July 24. It is necessary to record one incident of this visit that had close relation with facts that will demand our special attention. On May 5 he arrived at Manorhamilton and was disappointed to find that the Society there had lost its zeal for the gospel. He says: 'There was a general love to the gospel here till simple Robert Williams preached against the clergy. It is strange every one does not see (1) The sinfulness of railing at the clergy: if they are blind leaders of the blind, then (says our Lord) "Let them alone"; (2) The foolishness of it. It can never do good, and has frequently done much harm.' We know that it was only occasionally that John Wesley spoke out his mind about the conduct of the clergy. When he did so every stroke told. But, as a rule, he restrained himself from 'railing' at them; and he especially objected to pulpit tirades against them. His reticence must have often tried the temper of his persecuted preachers and people;

but he went on his way, being convinced that constant vituperation was useless and dangerous. We have referred to Robert Williams before as the R.W. in the stations of the preachers. In Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland* we get light on him and his career. He says:

> The itinerant thus condemned was withal a brave and devoted man, albeit he was no admirer of the Episcopal clergy. Tidings had come to Ireland of Embury's success in America, and Williams spoke to Wesley offering to go there, and asking his sanction and authority, which were given with the understanding that he was to labour in subordination to the missionaries who were about to be sent out. Williams was poor, and unable to meet the expense of the voyage, so he wrote to Mr. Ashton, a Methodist in Dublin, and persuaded him to emigrate with him and pay his passage. Hearing that his friend was ready to leave, Williams hastily left Castlebar, sold his horse to defray his debts and pay his way to the metropolis, and, carrying his saddle-bags on his arm, set off with a loaf of bread, a bottle of milk, and an empty purse. Ashton met him according to promise, and cheerfully paid his passage. They arrived in New York in August. . . . Thus Ireland lost Robert Williams, and America gained him who proved to be 'the Apostle of Methodism' in Virginia and North Carolina, and the spiritual father of thousands.[1]

On August 1 the Conference began in Leeds. The ordinary business was transacted. Two matters, however, which came before this Conference give its proceedings special distinction. It will have been seen that some members of the Conference were inclined to question Wesley's authority to rule over them. He had spoken out his mind plainly on the subject, but he felt that more should be said. He saw that there was a danger of a division among the preachers even while he lived; and he was convinced that, after his death, that danger would be greatly increased. He had prepared a paper on the subject; and, on Friday, August 4, he read it to the Conference. Its importance demands that we should reproduce it. Students of Methodist constitutional history will understand its significance.

> My dear Brethren,—
>
> 1. It has long been my desire, that all those Ministers of our Church who believe and preach salvation by faith might cordially agree between themselves and not hinder but help one another. After occasionally pressing this in private conversation, wherever I had opportunity, I

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 225.

wrote down my thoughts upon the head, and sent them to each in a letter. Out of fifty or sixty to whom I wrote, only three vouchsafed me an answer. So I give this up. I can do no more. They are a rope of sand; and such they will continue.

2. But it is otherwise with the travelling preachers in our Connexion: you are at present one body. You act in concert with each other, and by united counsels. And now is the time to consider what can be done in order to continue this union. Indeed, as long as I live, there will be no great difficulty: I am, under God, a centre of union to all our travelling as well as local preachers.

They all know me and my communication. They all love me for my work's sake: and, therefore, were it only out of regard to me, they will continue connected with each other. But, by what means may this connexion be preserved when God removes me from you?

3. I take it for granted it cannot be preserved by any means between those who have not a single eye. Those who aim at anything but the glory of God and the salvation of men; who desire or seek any earthly thing, whether honour, profit, or ease, will not, cannot continue in the Connexion; it will not answer their design. Some of them, perhaps a fourth of the whole number, will procure preferment in the Church. Others will turn Independents, and get separate congregations, like John Edwards and Charles Skelton. Lay your accounts with this, and be not surprised if some you do not suspect be of this number.

4. But what method can be taken to preserve a firm union between those who choose to remain together?

Perhaps you might take some such steps as these: On notice of my death, let all the preachers in England and Ireland repair to London within six weeks;

Let them seek God by solemn fasting and prayer;

Let them draw up articles of agreement, to be signed by those who choose to act in concert;

Let those be dismissed who do not choose it, in the most friendly manner possible;

Let them choose, by votes, a committee of three, five or seven, each of whom is to be Moderator in his turn;

Let the committee do what I do now; propose preachers to be tried, admitted, or excluded; fix the place of each preacher for the ensuing year, and the time of the next Conference.

5. Can anything be done now, in order to lay a foundation for this future union? Would it not be well, for any that are willing, to sign some articles of agreement before God calls me hence? Suppose something like these:

'We, whose names are underwritten, being thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a close union between those whom God is pleased to use as instruments in this glorious work, in order to preserve this union between ourselves, are resolved, God being our helper,

1. To devote ourselves entirely to God; denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily; steadily aiming at one thing, to save our own souls, and them that hear us.

ii. To preach the old Methodist doctrines, and no other, contained in the *Minutes* of the Conferences.

iii. To observe and enforce the whole Methodist discipline, laid down in the said *Minutes*.[1]

When Wesley had finished reading his paper the preachers desired him to extract the most material part of the *Minutes*, and send a copy to each Assistant, which he might communicate to all the preachers in his circuit, to be seriously considered. It is clear that Wesley's suggestions made a deep impression on the Conference. They mark a new departure. He had sought in vain for an alliance with the evangelical clergy. He confesses the failure of his attempt. Then he strikes out a new path. He arranges for the existence of an organized Methodism after his death. It was to be formed by men who preached 'the old Methodist doctrines' and enforced 'the whole Methodist discipline.' Those who were not prepared to submit to these requirements were to be dismissed 'in the most friendly manner possible.' As we look into the future, we know that in certain critical times the members of the Conference, who chose to act in concert, were accustomed to draw up and sign articles of agreement which often prevented serious disruption. But Wesley's paper is specially interesting to us because it contains suggestions which make us think of the arrangements of after-years which have secured the stability of Methodism to the present time.[2]

The second subject of special importance transacted at this Conference now demands our attention. The record in the *Minutes* of 1769 is as follows:

*Q.* 13. We have a pressing call from our brethren in New York (who have built a preaching-house) to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?

*A.* Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor.

*Q.* 14. What can we do further in token of our brotherly love?

*A.* Let us now make a collection among ourselves.

This was immediately done; and out of it £50 was allotted towards the payment of their debt, and about £20 given to our brethren for their passage.

It is well to compare this entry with others in Wesley's *Works* which refer to the same supremely important matter.

[1] See *Minutes of Conference*, i. 87–89.

[2] See the provisions of Wesley's *Deed of Declaration*. See *Summary of Methodist Law*, 373–380, 5th ed.

In his *Journal*, Part XV, published in 1774, this statement occurs: 'Thursday, August 3, 1769, I mentioned the case of our brethren at New York, who had built the first Methodist preaching-house in America, and were in great want of money, but much more of preachers. Two of our preachers, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, willingly offered themselves for the service, by whom we determined to send them £50 as a token of our brotherly love.'[1] Wesley's *Short History of the People called Methodists*, published in 1781, contains this record concerning the action of the Conference in 1769: 'Tuesday, August 1, our Conference began at Leeds. On Thursday I mentioned the case of our brethren at New York. For some years past, several of our brethren from England and Ireland (and some of our preachers) had settled in North America, and had in various places formed Societies, particularly at Philadelphia and New York. The Society at New York had lately built a commodious preaching-house, and now desired our help, being in great want of money, but much more of preachers. Two of our preachers, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, willingly offered themselves for the service, by whom we determined to send over £50 as a token of our brotherly love.'[2]

These records were written at different times. As to the building of 'the preaching-house' in New York, and the sending of the preachers, they may be said to be in agreement. But our attention is arrested by a variation which occurs in the *Journal* entry.[3] Wesley says that the brethren in New York 'had built the first Methodist preaching-house in America.' It is necessary to say that the correctness of this statement is disputed. In America the question has been discussed by a commission; but, as the representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church were withdrawn before the vote was taken the verdict in favour of the Southern claim is strongly challenged. Another commission has been appointed by the Methodist Episcopal Church. We await its decision, which is certain to be of great interest to students of American Methodist history.[4]

[1] Standard *Journal*, v. 331.

[2] *Short History of the Methodists*, Wesley's *Works*, xlii., 331, 8vo ed.

[3] This section of the *Journal* was not issued until 1774, a second edition being published in 1775.

[4] We have read the report of the first commission. Our correspondence with Dr. Sanford, and the study of Dr. Streeter's pamphlet on the question of 'Priority,' have given us light on the details of a most interesting topic.

While hesitating to interfere in a controversy which is taking place in another Church, we may be permitted to suggest what Wesley meant when he said that the New York people had built 'the first Methodist preaching-house in America.' He was using a word that was well understood by the Methodists in England. For many years he avoided the word 'chapel' when describing the places of worship in which his people assembled. 'The Chapel' in West Street, London, bore that title because of its 'consecration' before it began to be used by the Methodists. As to the term 'meeting-house,' he avoided it altogether. It was a name for their places of worship which Dissenters used. As an alternative, he chose for Methodist buildings the name of 'preaching-house,' and he insisted on its use. But a 'preaching-house' had to be settled on a deed. In that deed trustees were appointed and their powers were defined. Especially, the relation of the trustees to Wesley and the Methodist Conference was clearly laid down. In addition, a defence against the preaching of doctrines out of harmony with the recognized teaching of John Wesley was introduced; and there were other matters that received legal force from the provisions of the deed. The question arises: Did the John Street 'preaching-house' in New York answer to this description when Wesley made the entry in his Journal? If so, was there an earlier building in America that fulfilled these conditions?

In Dr. J. B. Wakeley's *Lost Chapters from the Early History of American Methodism* there is a copy of the deed of the first John Street 'preaching-house.' It is dated November 2, 1770. The trustees are Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, ministers of the gospel; William Lupton, merchant; Thomas Webb, gentleman; John Southwell, merchant; Henry Newton, shopkeeper; and James Jarvis, hatter. To them the house, 'erected and built for the service of the Almighty God after the manner of the people called Methodists,' was conveyed. Then follow the trusts, which should be carefully considered:

Nevertheless, upon special trust and confidence, and to the intent that they and the survivors of them, and all other trustees for the time being do and shall permit John Wesley, late of Lincoln College in the University of Oxford, clerk, and such other persons as he, the said John Wesley, shall from time to time appoint, and at all times

during his natural life, and no other person or persons, to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said meeting-house and premises.

That the said John Wesley and such other person or persons as he shall from time to time appoint, may therein preach and expound God's Holy Word; and after his, the said John Wesley's, decease, upon further trust and confidence, and to the intent that the said trustees and the survivors of them, and the trustees for the time being, do and shall permit Charles Wesley, late of Christ Church College, Oxford, clerk, and such person or persons as he shall from time to time appoint, and at all times during his life, and no other, to have and enjoy the full use and benefit of the said meeting-house and premises for the purposes aforesaid; and after the decease of the survivor of the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, then upon further trust and confidence, that the said Richard Boardman and the rest of the hereinbefore mentioned trustees, or the major part of them, or the survivors of them, and the major part of the trustees for the time being, shall, and from time to time, and for ever thereafter will, permit such person or persons as shall be appointed at the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists in London, Bristol, Leeds, and the city of New York aforesaid, and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid, provided always that the said person or persons so from time to time to be chosen as aforesaid, preach no other doctrine than is contained in the said John Wesley's *Notes upon the New Testament* and his four volumes of *Sermons*; And upon further trust and confidence, that as often as any of the trustees hereby appointed, or the trustees for the time being, shall die, or cease to be a member of the Society commonly called Methodists, the rest of the said trustees for the time being, as soon as conveniently may be, shall and may choose another trustee or trustees, in order to keep up such a number of trustees that they may in no time hereafter be less than seven nor more than nine.[1]

Thomas Taylor, in his letter to Wesley, says: 'I was determined the house should be on the same footing as the Orphan House at *Newcastle*, and others in *England*: but as we were ignorant how to draw the deeds, we purchased for us and our heirs, until a copy of the writings from *England* was sent us, which we desire may be sent by the first opportunity.'[2] In the same letter he also described the John Street building as 'the first preaching-house on the original *Methodist* plan in all *America*.' Wesley had found out the defects of the Orphan House trust deed, but it is clear that a copy of the 'Model Deed' of 1770 was before the lawyer who drew up the John Street deed. The extract we have given from the latter,

[1] Wakeley's *Lost Chapters of American Methodism*, 58–63. It will be observed that the name 'meeting-house' is used to describe the building.

[2] See *ante*, p. 230.

with slight variations, is a verbatim quotation from the English form for the settlement of preaching-houses.[1] Dr. Buckley in his *History of Methodism* describes the John Street deed as 'one of the most important Methodist historical documents extant.'[2] There can be no doubt of its great interest. It proves that John Street preaching-house was settled on the English Methodist plan. We must leave the experts to decide whether Wesley and Taylor were right when they declared that it was the first preaching-house built in America that was so settled.

On August 22 Boardman and Pilmoor's ship, the *Mary and Elizabeth*, began its tedious voyage to America. It met with much bad weather and did not arrive at Philadelphia until October 21, the voyage lasting for nine weeks. Boardman soon made his way to New York, leaving Pilmoor to begin his mission in Philadelphia. Before his departure he and Pilmoor rejoiced to meet Lieutenant Webb. They found that the Society in Philadelphia numbered about one hundred members. Webb had retired from the army, receiving the full pay of a captain. Settling in Long Island, he hired a house and preached in it. He became an evangelist. He roamed through a wide space of country preaching and forming Societies. Dr. Buckley says: 'If Philip Embury founded Methodism in New York, Captain Webb was no less its founder in Philadelphia. Here he preached in a sail-loft and formed a class of seven members. It was he, also, who introduced Methodism into Delaware, and he was equally successful whether preaching in Wilmington or among the farmers and fishermen on the banks of the Brandywine River. He also lifted up his commanding voice with wonderful effect in Baltimore.'[3] His generous financial support of the scheme for building the New York 'preaching-house' secured its success. Wakeley expresses a doubt whether John Street Chapel would have been erected at that time without his influence and the money contributed by him. We can imagine the gladness with which Boardman and Pilmoor greeted him when they met him in Philadelphia.

It is interesting to watch the missionaries as they open their campaign in America. On Sunday, October 29, Pilmoor

[1] See *Minutes of Conference*, i. 606–610. [2] Vol. i. 131.
[3] Buckley's *History of Methodism*, i. 136.

preached to 'a fine congregation' in the Methodist 'Room' at seven o'clock in the morning. Then he attended public worship in the Episcopal Church. It had been announced that he would preach on the common adjoining the city of Philadelphia at five o'clock in the evening. He found 'a vast multitude' gathered together. It was the week of horse races. A stage had been erected for the spectators; so he took advantage of it. Standing on it, he found himself surrounded by 'several thousands of genteel persons' who listened with the utmost attention while he declared 'Christ Jesus, the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people.' Leaving the common, he met the Methodist Society in their own 'Room,' and exhorted them 'to walk worthy of their high calling, and adorn the gospel of Christ.' He was delighted with the day's work. Writing to John Wesley he says: 'Blessed be God for field-preaching! There seems to be a great and effectual door opening in this country, and I hope many souls will be gathered in. When I parted with you at Leeds, I found it very hard I have reason to bless God that I ever saw your face. And though I am well-nigh four thousand miles from you, I have inward fellowship with your spirit. Even while I am writing, my heart flows with love to you and all our dear friends at home.'[1]

The extracts from Pilmoor's *Journal*, given in Lockwood's book, are of exceptional interest. His days were crowded with work. He preached in 'the Room.' He introduced the five o'clock service in the morning. He regularly met the Society. On one occasion he read and explained the Methodist *Rules* to a large congregation of serious people. He gives the following reason for this public reading of the *Rules of the Society of the People called Methodists*: 'Many persons, who are engaged in religious matters, take pains to be as secret as they can; but I wish to be *as public as possible*, because I think that everything that is of God will bear the light, and whatever is contrary thereto ought to be *discovered* that it may be *amended*.' During these early days of his mission he was cheered by the assistance, for a time, of Robert Williams, who was on his way from New York to Maryland. Webb also came up from Wilmington. In Pilmoor's entry in his *Journal*, on Saturday, November 4, 1769, we meet with light

[1] Lockwood's *The Western Pioneers*, 85.

for which we have waited. Having recorded the fact of Webb's arrival, he says: 'The work that God began by him and Mr. Strawbridge, a local preacher from Ireland, soon spread through the greatest part of Baltimore County, and several hundreds of people were brought to repentance, and turned to the Lord.' This reference to Robert Strawbridge's work in the county of Baltimore possesses great significance.

The preliminary work of Pilmoor in Philadelphia was so successful that it was proved, beyond question, that the 'Room' in which the services had been held was too small to contain a swiftly increasing congregation; indeed, at the time we have reached, it would 'scarce contain half the number of those who wished to listen to the preacher.' On Thursday, November 23, a meeting assembled to consider this subject. It was determined that an attempt should be made to secure a suitable building. The result was that 'the shell of a building,' which had been erected for the use of some of the members of the Dutch Presbyterian Church, was purchased. It had cost more than £2,000 to erect, and Pilmoor acquired it for £650. Lockwood, in recording the fact, says: 'How the needful amount was raised we cannot divine: most probably the noble-hearted Webb, whose purse was never closed against the call of the Saviour and the interests of His Church, afforded substantial aid, while others gladly ministered of their abundance or their poverty.' The chapel was opened for public worship on Friday, November 24, 1769; and Pilmoor preached in it on that day to a numerous congregation 'with great freedom of mind.' Lockwood says: 'Anxious to avoid misapprehension, Pilmoor submitted to its congregation a written statement of the objects contemplated by himself and his Methodist associates, including among other items a proviso that "the deeds of settlement shall be made as soon as convenient, and exactly according to the plan of all the Methodist chapels in England, Scotland, and Ireland."'[1]

Pilmoor's *Journal*, which is still carefully preserved in America, makes it possible to understand his proceedings immediately after his landing. It is not so easy to follow Boardman's early course. But we are not without guidance from writers who have already given us great assistance in

[1] Lockwood's *The Western Pioneers*, 92.

our study of the problem of the introduction of Methodism into America. After preaching several times to increasing congregations in Philadelphia, he left the city. Mounting his horse, he began his journey to New York. On his way he reached a town—supposed to be Trenton. Seeing a barrack, he pulled bridle, and asked a soldier who was standing in the street if there were any Methodists in the place. 'Yes,' he replied, 'we are all Methodists; that is, we would be glad to hear a Methodist preach.' Dr. Buckley says: 'A Presbyterian church was secured, and the ringing of the bell at an unusual hour called together a large concourse, to whom an impressive sermon was preached, the effect of which was permanent, though attended with considerable excitement at the time on account of the unusual circumstances.'[1] After the service, in which we see once more the influence of British soldiers, Boardman rode on his way to New York.

Boardman began his work in the John Street 'preaching-house.' It would hold about seven hundred people; but the crowd was so great that only one-third of those who wished to hear the preacher could get into the building. On November 4, 1769, Boardman wrote to John Wesley and told him of his experiences. In Wakeley's *Lost Chapters recovered from the Early History of American Methodism* we get light on Boardman's first days in New York. In 1858, or thereabouts, 'a singular old book,' that had been lost for many years, was found. It is described as containing the earliest authentic records of Methodism in America. When it came into Wakeley's hands he made a number of selections from its contents and published them in his book. At present we are chiefly interested in an agreement which was entered into between Boardman and the officers of the New York Methodist Society on November 1, 1769. This is the record in 'the old book':

'Mr. Richard Boardman, assistant to, and preacher in the Connexion with Rev. John Wesley, also Philip Embury, local preacher, and William Lupton, a trustee and steward (in New York), thinking it necessary that some regulations should be made for the preachers in New York, agreed, on the first of November, 1769: *First*, That each preacher, having laboured three months in New York, shall receive three guineas to provide themselves with wearing apparel. *Secondly*, That

[1] Buckley's *History of Methodism in the United States*, i. 150.

there shall be preaching on Sunday morning and Sunday evening; also on Tuesday and Thursday evenings; and the preacher to meet the Society every Wednesday evening.' The financial part of this arrangement must not be misunderstood. The accounts entered in the 'old book' show that, on December 27, £2 5s. was paid 'for a hat for Mr. Boardman.' We presume that a generous definition might exclude a hat from 'wearing apparel.' On January 30, 1770, the accounts show an item which concerns 'board.' The sum of £12 was paid 'Mr. Sause for boarding and lodging Mr. Boardman.' These entries must be considered when attempting to estimate an American preacher's 'allowances' at this early stage of the mission.[1]

In 1769 we note the arrival of another evangelist in America. John King left London and landed in America in the latter part of that year. We see him first in Philadelphia. He preached there 'over the graves of the poor in the Potters' Field,' and thus began a career of great usefulness. His name is most conspicuous in the story of the introduction of Methodism into Baltimore. He was an undaunted worker. He preached his first sermon in Baltimore standing on a blacksmith's block at the intersection of Front and French Streets. His next sermon was delivered from a table placed at the junction of Baltimore and Calvert Streets. Dr. Stevens shall describe the service and its results:

> It was the militia training-day, and the drunken crowd charged upon him so effectually as to upset the table and lay him prostrate on the earth. He knew, however, that the noblest preachers had suffered like trials in England, and he maintained his ground courageously. The commander of the troops, an Englishman, recognized him as a fellow countryman, and, defending him, restored order, and allowed him to proceed. Victorious over the mob, he made so favourable an impression as to be invited to preach in the English church of St. Paul's; but improved that opportunity with such fervour as to receive no repetition of the courtesy. Methodism had now, however, entered Baltimore—down to our day its chief citadel in the New World.[2]

In Theodore Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* there is a paragraph that claims our special attention. In describing 'The Holston Settlements' in Tennessee, he says: 'Presbyterianism was not, however, destined even here to remain

[1] Wakeley's *Lost Chapters*, 199–200.
[2] Stevens's *History of American Methodism*, 47, English ed.

the leading frontier creed. Other sects still more democratic, still more in keeping with backwoods life and thought, largely supplanted it. Methodism did not become a power until after the close of the Revolution; but the Baptists followed close on the heels of the Presbyterians. They, too, soon built log meeting-houses here and there, while their preachers cleared the forest and hunted elk and buffalo like the other pioneer settlers.'[1] The fact that Presbyterian and Baptist 'log meeting-houses' existed from early times in the American wildernesses increases our interest in a building which now claims our attention.

We are aware that there has been considerable difficulty in fixing the date of Robert Strawbridge's arrival in America. Dr. Stevens wrote to William Reilly, a well-known and highly respected Irish Methodist minister, on the subject. In 1856 Reilly had been on a deputation to America, and must have impressed Dr. Stevens with the strength of his character and the soundness of his judgement. In order to get the best opinion on the subject of Strawbridge's departure from Ireland, Reilly consulted his friend Mr. John Shillington, who was born within four miles of the sphere of the labours of Robert Strawbridge in Ireland. Mr. Shillington was personally conversant with many old people who had known Strawbridge and were well acquainted with his movements. After mature consideration Mr. Shillington's judgement was that Strawbridge's departure from Ireland could not have taken place sooner than 1764 nor later than 1765. Dr. Buckley and Dr. Stevens accept this judgement; so does Crookshank, the careful and well-informed historian of Methodism in Ireland.[2]

Dr. Stevens sheds clear light on Strawbridge's proceedings on landing in America. He had come to America 'to secure a more competent livelihood—which object, however, he never accomplished.' Dr. Stevens says: 'He plunged at once, with his young wife, into the backwoods for Frederick County, where he settled on "Sam's Creek," which had but recently been reclaimed from the perils of savage invasion.' He built a house for himself, and we know that he opened his house for preaching. His preaching was followed by good results; in it he was able to form a Methodist Society.

[1] *The Winning of the West*, ii. 224.

[2] Buckley's *History of Methodism in the United States*, i. 141–142; Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 175.

Dr. Stevens then says that ' not long after ' he built the log meeting-house on 'Sam's Creek,' which was about a mile from his home. ' It was a rude structure, 22 ft. square, and, though long occupied, was never finished, but remained without windows, door, or floor. The logs were sawed on one side for a doorway, and holes were made on the other three sides for windows.'[1] Dr. Stevens does not give us the date of the building of ' the log meeting-house,' but we note that there is an interval between the arrival of Strawbridge and its erection. If he reached America ' not later than 1765 ' it would seem that the ' meeting-house ' may have been built in 1766, the year when Philip Embury began to preach and formed a Society in New York. It was in that year that Embury secured a hired room near the barracks, in which room Lieutenant Webb made his startling appearance. It is clear that, unknown to each other, two centres of Methodist work were created in America. But the workers were soon to meet. Webb found out Strawbridge ; and they became comrades in the great work of the introduction of Methodism into several of the towns and cities of America.

[1] Stevens's *History of American Methodism*, 40, English ed.

## XX

## A MEMORABLE YEAR

THE year 1769 occupies a prominent place in the annals of Methodism. No one can read the story of the introduction of Methodism into America without seeing that a great step was taken by the Conference when it sent Boardman and Pilmoor to New York. We have read the descriptions of their experiences which are contained in English and American histories; but, in addition, we have had the advantage of looking at the results of the work of Methodism in America during two visits paid to the country. Our journeys have stretched from Toronto in Canada to Atlanta in Georgia. We can testify to the fact that as the traveller, in the present day, passes through the States from north to south he constantly catches sight of large Methodist churches which stand out prominently among the houses in cities and towns. They are rivalled in number by Baptist churches. After asking questions about these buildings, he will probably conclude that the Baptists and Methodists possess the land. As the train sweeps along the eastern coast-line, he thinks of 'rigging-lofts' and 'log huts'; and then he quietly gives thanks to God for the wonders He has wrought.

Before resuming our description of John Wesley's work in 1769 we must give attention to an important subject. It is necessary to emphasize the fact that the Methodist Conference sent out Boardman and Pilmoor to America as 'missionaries.' We readily accord 'the pride of place' among the English Foreign Missionary Societies to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. It held its first meeting on June 27, 1701. It is a mistake to say that its sole aim was to supply the British colonies with clergymen who would restrict their work to the colonists. When it sent out John Wesley and Benjamin Ingham to Savannah in 1735 it was arranged that they should go 'as missionaries

to the Indians.' When Dean Willis preached the sermon at the first anniversary of the society in 1702 he declared that the design of the society was, 'in the first place, to settle the state of religion, as well as may be, among our own people in the foreign plantations; and then to proceed, in the best methods they can, towards the conversion of the natives.' The men sent out by the society were 'missionaries'; and they bear that name in the printed 'Instructions' they received when leaving England.[1] John Wesley, in sending his preachers to America, did not forget his own 'marching orders.' He sent them as 'missionaries.' They preached to the colonists, and to large numbers of negroes who were gathered into the Methodist Societies.

In 1843 the Rev. P. P. Sandford published an interesting volume styled *Memoirs of Mr. Wesley's Missionaries to America*. Boardman and Pilmoor receive honourable mention in the group of Methodist preachers who first laboured in the colonies. We think also of a monument which stands in the Eutaw Street Methodist Church in Baltimore. The inscription informs us that it is 'Sacred to the Memory of the Rev. Francis Asbury, who came as a Missionary to America in 1771.' The American Methodists make no mistake as to the character of his commission. He nobly fulfilled it. From 1771 to the spring of 1816 he was a missionary who spent his strength in wandering over the ever-extending expanse of the United States. Methodists who visit the city of Washington in the present day will stand with reverence in the presence of the statue of a horseman that adorns a plot of ground near the Capitol. The site for this statue was granted by the American Government. They knew the value of the work done by Wesley's 'missionary'—Francis Asbury. Those who persistently say that Methodist missionary work dates its origin from a meeting held in Leeds on October 6, 1813, should reconsider their statement. It began in 1769, when John Wesley sent his missionaries to America.[2]

We must now return to England and John Wesley. During the remainder of 1769 he often thought of his missionaries

[1] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 110, 112, 114.

[2] The meeting in Leeds was held to form a missionary society for the Leeds District. Its first object was to assist to raise money for the support of missionaries who were then carrying on work which had been commenced many years before. Its second purpose was to enable the Methodist Conference to extend its missionary work to other countries.

and of America. In a letter to Walter Sellon, dated December 30, 1769, he says that he had not yet determined whether he should go to America or not. He had been importuned for some time to do so, but he did not think that sufficiently strong grounds for taking the voyage had been alleged. His final resolve was that he must have a clear call to America before he could feel himself at liberty to leave Europe. The matter was postponed but not forgotten. We shall have to refer to it at a later stage. When we consider the condition of the Methodist Societies in England at the time when he wrote to Walter Sellon we see the wisdom of Wesley's resolve. It was imperative that he should remain at his post.[1]

During the month of August, 1769, John Wesley spent several weeks in Wales. We are especially interested in his visit to Trevecca. He arrived there on August 23, and met some of his old friends and several of the men whose names are connected with the great revival that had changed the aspect of religion in the Principality. A large crowd had assembled to celebrate Lady Huntingdon's birthday and the first anniversary of the opening of Trevecca College. Lady Huntingdon's hope was that the College might serve as a training-school for the Arminian and Calvinist sections of Methodists—a hope that was not realized. But, closing our eyes to the future, we regard this gathering at Trevecca with special interest. Lady Huntingdon was there; so was John Fletcher, who took a prominent part in the services held on the two days of the 'celebration.' In the evening of August 23 Wesley preached in Lady Huntingdon's chapel to 'as many as it could well contain.' After the service he went to Howell Harris's house and gave a short exhortation to his 'large family.' The next morning he met the 'family' again, and administered the Lord's Supper to its members. At ten o'clock the public service began. The chapel was too small to contain the congregation, and the service had to be held in the court. John Fletcher was the preacher. Wesley describes his sermon as being 'exceeding lively.' But one sermon was not sufficient to content the crowd. When Fletcher had finished, William Williams of Pantycelyn, took his place. He had been associated with Harris, Rowlands, and Davies in the great Welsh revival. He was converted under the

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiv. 202, 8vo ed.

preaching of Howell Harris, and became the hymnologist of the great movement. He preached to the crowd in the court-yard in Welsh. The people listened eagerly. In the present day, when so many persons insist on sermons being 'brief, bright, and brotherly,' it may be well to record the fact that the service in the court began at ten o'clock in the morning, and concluded between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. At three o'clock Wesley preached in the court, and Fletcher followed him, the service lasting for two hours. Between seven and eight o'clock a love-feast began. When it ended Wesley and some of his friends retired into a wood for rest and quiet talk. Speaking of the wood, he says: 'It is exceeding pleasantly laid out in walks; one of which leads to a little mount, raised in the midst of a meadow, that commands a delightful prospect. This is Howell Harris's work, who has likewise greatly enlarged and beautified his house; so that, with the gardens, orchards, walks, and pieces of water that surround it, it is a kind of little paradise.' So let us close our account of this great day, leaving John Wesley and his companions in the wood watching the stars as they shine in the summer sky.

After a brief visit to Cornwall, John Wesley made his way to Bristol. During his journey we note that on September 8 he preached at Bridgwater, where Methodist services had been discontinued for some years. In the afternoon he started for Bristol. But he could not resist the appeal of Brent Knoll. He climbed to the top of the hill, and revelled in a prospect he enthusiastically describes. He says: 'I know not I ever before saw such a prospect. Westward, one may see to the mouth of the Bristol Channel; and the three other ways, as far as the eye can reach. And most of the land which you see is well cultivated, well wooded, and well watered; so that the globe of earth, in its present condition, can hardly afford a more pleasing scene.' Some years before he had looked out on part of this landscape from the summit of Glastonbury Tor; but from Brent Knoll a greater expanse of land and sea was revealed. It is always a pleasure to think of Wesley's rapture in the presence of blue distances. One secret of his long life is revealed when he stands in the presence of a wide-spreading, lovely expanse of country. He seems to forget the hard usage, wearying work, raving mobs, and the disappointments

and sorrows of his life. He sees a new earth filled with the glory of the Lord. And the man who has the power to discern that glory possesses one of the secrets of perpetual youth.

On Saturday, September 9, Wesley was in Bristol, where he met Lady Huntingdon. She had returned from Trevecca with her friends Lady Anne Erskine, Lady Buchan, and Miss Orton.[1] Three days later she accompanied him to Kingswood School. A great change had occurred in its condition. We are familiar with Wesley's records of his disappointments; but the result of his examination of its state at this visit caused him to believe that better days had come. He says: 'The grievance now is the number of children. Instead of thirty (as I desired) we have near fifty; whereby our masters are burdened. And it is scarce possible to keep them in so exact order as we might do a smaller number. However, this still comes nearer a Christian school than any I know in the kingdom.' In a short time he was able to bear even more encouraging testimony to the Christian character of the school.

During this visit to Bristol, John Wesley, on Sunday, September 17, preached to a serious congregation in Prince's Street, near the docks. In the crowd were many sailors, who 'gaped and stared as if they had never heard a sermon before.' In the afternoon he held a service near the New Square, which soon became known as King's Square. He took for his text, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' He had chosen it expecting that his sermon 'would remove rather than increase prejudice.' He does not state, in his *Journal*, the line he took in his discourse; but he tells us that he was much mistaken in his expectation. He subsequently heard that one of his hearers soon after told a friend that 'Mr. Wesley is as dark and blind as ever.' A more cheerful entry appears in the *Journal* on Sunday, October 8. On that day he permitted all the members of Whitefield's Society who desired to attend the Methodist love-feast to come to the 'New Room.' Many of them accepted the invitation. The 'Room' was filled; and a service rich in spiritual influence was held. The next day he left Bristol and set out on his visitation of the Societies in the South. On October 13 he was in Portsmouth. A few minutes after he left the water-side Pascal Paoli landed. He was disappointed that he had missed the opportunity of

[1] See note in Wesley's *Journal*, v. 340.

joining in the welcome to the great patriot. For years Paoli had fought for the independence of Corsica. His struggle was in vain; so he came to England, which has been for many years the place of refuge of the heroes of 'lost causes.' Wesley greatly admired him. In making the record of his disappointment in the *Journal* he says: 'Surely He who hath been with him from his youth up hath not sent him into England for nothing. Lord, show him what is Thy will concerning him, and give him a Kingdom that cannot be moved!' The day after Paoli's landing Wesley set out from Portsmouth at two o'clock in the morning, and reached London in the afternoon.

Charles Wesley was in London. On Sunday, October 15, the brothers were at Spitalfields in the morning. They had a crowded congregation there and at the Foundery at the evening service. John Wesley's comment in his *Journal* reveals his hope that the worst of the troubles that had hindered the prosperity of the London Societies were passing away. He asks, 'Is God about to work here, as He did some years ago? If so, having learned experience by the things we have suffered, I trust we shall not quench the Spirit as we did before.' The Maxfield and Bell episodes had left a wound that often ached; but the services on that Sunday were like an anodyne. The relief that came raised the hope of the coming of days when such pain of heart would only be a memory of the past.

In the congregations at Spitalfields and the Foundery on Sunday, October 15, there was a man who listened to John Wesley with great attention. He was Professor Liden, a distinguished Swede, who had heard of Wesley's work. Visiting London he determined to know more about it. He recorded his impression in his journal. He seems to have had an interview with John Wesley, in which he sought to know something about the system of Methodism and the mode of its administration. The subject was so wide that it could not be exhausted in an interview, so Wesley promised to write him a letter. The letter was found among Professor Liden's documents that were contained in a box that was not opened for many years after his death. We give it in its complete form.

*November* 16, 1769.

To answer those questions thoroughly would require a volume. It is partly done in the little Tracts: on the points wherein they are defective I will add a few words as my time permits.

(1) There are many thousand Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland which are not formed into Societies. Indeed, none are but those (or rather a part of those) who are under the care of Mr. Wesley. These at present contain a little less than thirty thousand persons.

(2) The places at which there is constant preaching (three or four times a week at least) are the Foundery, near Moorfields, the French Church (in West Street), near the Seven Dials (at these two places there is preaching every morning and evening), the French Church in Spitalfields, the Chappel in Snowsfields, Southwark, the Chappel in Wapping, and one not far from Smithfield.

(3) They have many schools for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, but only one for teaching the higher parts of learning. This is kept in Kingswood, near Bristol, and contains about forty scholars. These are all boarders, and might be abundantly more, but the house will not contain them: *The Rules of Kingswood School* give an account of the books read and the method pursued therein.

(4) I believe some of the best preachers are James Morgan, Peter Jaco, Jos. Cownley, T. Simpson, John Helton, John Pawson, Alex. Mather, Tho. Olivers, Sam Levick, Duncan Wright, Jacob Rowell, Christopher Hopper, Dan. Bumstead, Alexander McNab, and William Thompson. Each of these preachers has his food wherever he labours, and twelve pounds a year for cloaths and other expences. If he is married he has ten pounds a year for his wife. This money is raised by the voluntary contributions of the Societies. It is by these likewise that the poor are assisted where the allowance fixed by the laws of the land does not suffice. Accordingly the Stewards of the Societies in London distribute seven or eight pounds weekly among the poor.

(5) Mr. Whitefield is a Calvinist, Messrs. Wesley are not; this is the only material difference between them. And this has continued without any variation ever since Mr. Whitefield adopted those opinions. The consequences of that difference are touched upon in the letter sent two or three years ago to the persons named therein.

(6) There are only three Methodist Societies in America: one at Philadelphia, one at New York, and one twelve miles from it. There are five preachers there; two have been at New York for some years. Three are lately gone over. Mr. Whitefield has published a particular account of everything relative to the Orphan-house (in Georgia).

(7) The most eminent writers against the Methodists are the late Bishop of London (Dr. Gibson), Dr. Church, the Bishop of Gloucester (Dr. Warburton), and Bishop Lavington. Bishops Gibson and Lavington were thoroughly convinced of their mistake before they died. I believe Dr. Church was so too. None I think but Mr. Perronet has wrote for the Methodists.

(8) No Moravians belong to their Societies. They have no considerable settlements in England but at London, Bedford, and Pudsey, a little town near Leeds, in Yorkshire. They make a profound secret of everything relating to their community. What I know of them I have

published in the *Journals*. The Count's House at Chelsea is a Palace for a Prince. Truly they are wise in their generation.[1]

The value of this letter is evident. It gives Wesley's view of the Methodism of that period. It is not an exhaustive statement, but it throws welcome light on some questions of great importance.

On October 16 John Wesley left London. He had arranged to preach in Oxford at ten o'clock on the following day. During his journey he had to consider a subject which had perplexed him. It had been arranged that the service in Oxford should be held in a Dissenting meeting-house. It is true that he was gradually subduing his prejudices against Dissenters, but the victory was not complete. His difficulties were increased by the fact that the service was to be held in Oxford. He confesses that he did not like to preach in the meeting-house ; so he rode along deeply pondering. The next day his perplexity vanished. He says : ' The proprietors cut the knot for me by locking up the doors. So I preached in James Mears's garden ; and to such a congregation as I had not had in Oxford since I preached in St. Mary's Church.' As the years went by he ceased to be troubled by these scruples. He gladly availed himself of the opportunities of preaching in Dissenters' chapels.

During this tour Wesley once more visited High Wycombe On Friday, October 20, he preached there to ' a lively congregation.' That is his record ; but he must have heard news that gave him deep content. Miss Hannah Ball, a member of the High Wycombe Society, had commenced a Sunday school. Writing to him the next year, she gives us a glimpse of her scholars. She says : ' The children meet twice a week, every Sunday and Monday. They are a wild little company, but seem willing to be instructed. I labour among them, earnestly desiring to promote the interest of the Church of Christ.'[2] There can be no doubt that Tyerman is right when he affirms that, fourteen years before Robert Raikes began his Sunday school in Gloucester, Miss Ball's school existed in High Wycombe. He might also have said that Robert Raikes commenced his school on the advice and with the assistance of a Methodist lady, who afterwards married Samuel Bradburn, one of the best known of the early Methodist preachers.

[1] See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1889, 119.
[2] Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 534.

Wesley returned to London; then, on November 1, he arrived in Norwich. The improvement in the congregation there had given him encouragement on a former visit; and that encouragement must have been increased. He informs us that he preached 'in the shell of the new "House," crowded enough within and without.' A note in his *Journal* says that this 'House' was in Cherry Lane. Its erection must have met with his approval, for he sent £270 towards its cost. His own comment on the condition of the Society in Norwich is that he left the people there 'more united than they had been for many years.' Returning to London, he preached on the last day of November at Wandsworth. Once more we hear his joyous note. He says: 'For many years the people here were the most dead, but are now the most alive, of any about London.' As 1769 ran to its close he must have felt that it had been a year of extraordinary advance and blessing. We can imagine his thankfulness when he met the Society in London on December 26. This is his record of the meeting: 'I read the letters from our preachers in America informing us that God had begun a glorious work there; that both in New York and Philadelphia multitudes flock to hear and behave with the deepest seriousness; and that the Society in each place already contains above a hundred members.'[1]

[1] *Journal*, v. 350–351.

## XXI

## GEORGE WHITEFIELD

In reading the records of John Wesley's work during the years 1769 and 1770 we are cheered by the fact that they contain no doleful allusions to the state of his health. Instead of pathetic 'farewells' to the Conference, we seem to hear the voice of a man who has renewed his youth. On June 28, 1770, he makes this entry in his *Journal*: 'I can hardly believe that I am this day entered into the sixty-eighth year of my age. How marvellous are the ways of God! How has He kept me even from a child! From ten to thirteen or fourteen I had little but bread to eat, and not great plenty of that. I believe this was so far from hurting me, that it laid the foundation of lasting health. When I grew up, in consequence of reading Dr. Cheyne, I chose to eat sparingly, and drink water. This was another great means of continuing my health, till I was about seven-and-twenty. I then began spitting of blood, which continued several years. A warm climate cured this. I was afterwards brought to the brink of death by a fever; but it left me healthier than before. Eleven years after I was in the third stage of a consumption; in three months it pleased God to remove this also. Since that time I have known neither pain nor sickness, and am now healthier than I was forty years ago. This hath God wrought!'[1] We are not prepared to accept this statement as a correct record of Wesley's sicknesses, but it increases our admiration for his enviable power of forgetting disagreeable things. There can be no doubt, however, that in 1770 his health had wonderfully improved. In evidence of that fact, we may say that during 1770 we cannot find any reference to his chaise and pair of horses. Once more he is in the saddle.

[1] See note in Wesley's *Journal* explaining the apparent confusion in his statement concerning his age. On June 28, by the new style calendar, his age was sixty-seven years and eleven days (*Journal*, v. 373).

Towards the end of March he gives a lesson to riders. He says: 'Near thirty years ago I was thinking, "How is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading?" History, poetry, and philosophy I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times. No account can possibly be given but this: because I then throw the reins on his neck. I then set myself to observe; and I aver that, in riding above a hundred thousand miles, I scarce remember any horse, except two that would fall head over heels anyway, to fall or make a considerable stumble while I rode *with a slack rein*. To fancy, therefore, that a tight rein prevents stumbling is a capital blunder. I have repeated the trial more frequently than most men in the kingdom can do. A slack rein will prevent stumbling, if anything will. But in some horses nothing can.' Whatever we may think of Wesley's theory it is clear that the enthusiasm of the horseman still glowed in his heart.

In describing some of the principal events mentioned in Wesley's records of the year 1770, it should be remembered that the news from America had turned his thoughts from the minor difficulties of ordinary life. He felt that his old saying, 'The world is my parish,' had acquired a broader and deeper meaning. He often wondered whether he ought to leave England for a time and see for himself the Methodist Societies that were being formed in America. On February 17, in a letter to Lady Maxwell, he says: 'I have some thoughts of going to America; but the way is not yet plain. I wait till Providence shall speak more clearly on one side or the other.'[1] The subject was constantly in his mind; but conscience compelled him to deny himself.

On Thursday, February 8, Wesley went to Wandsworth. He gives us this account of his visit: 'I went to Wandsworth. What a proof have we here that God's "thoughts are not as our thoughts"! Every one thought no good could be done here; we had tried for above twenty years. Very few would even give us the hearing; and the few that did seemed little the better for it. But, all on a sudden, crowds flock to hear; many were cut to the heart; many filled with peace and joy in believing; many long for the whole image of God. In the evening, though it was a sharp frost, the room was as hot

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 330, 8vo ed.

as a stove. And they drank in the word with all greediness; as also at five in the morning, while I applied, "Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean." ' This bright record seems to be a fitting introduction to a year in which Wesley frequently sounded a jubilant note. He had recovered his health and high spirits. We wonder if he was aware of the progress of the work in Antigua. If he knew of it, he might have brightened his picture of Methodism in Wandsworth in its early days.

At the beginning of March, Wesley mounted his horse and set out on a long journey. It lasted for five months, and it took him into the highlands of Scotland. March and April in 1770 were months to be remembered for storms of rain and snow. But he and his companions, Thomas Rankin and John Helton, who joined him at Birmingham, fought their way through. Before they met him he had visited Newbury. He had been much importuned to preach there, but it was difficult to find a place in which the service could be held. The Dissenters refused to permit him to preach in their meeting-house. An application was made to the mayor for the use of an old 'play-house,' but his Worship stoutly declined to give his permission for its occupation for such a purpose. The only place available was a workshop. It is described as 'large and commodious.' Wesley preached there; 'but it would by no means contain the congregation.' Visiting the Societies on his way North, Wesley and his companions reached Dumfries on April 15, the evening of Easter Day. Ten days later they rode to Dunkeld. The mountains were covered with snow, but in the evening they got to Dalwhinnie. They stayed there for the night. In the morning Wesley was informed that so much snow had fallen that it would be impossible to get to Inverness. But, although they were informed that three young women had been 'swallowed up' by the snow, he and his two preachers determined to make the attempt. They set out. But about noon they were 'at a full stop.' The snow, driving together on the top of the mountain, had quite blocked up the road. They dismounted. Striking out of the road warily, sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right, 'with many stumbles, but no hurt,' they got to Dalmagavie, and before sunset to Inverness.

Wesley's first visit to Inverness must have left pleasant recollections. He does not give us any clear account of the introduction of Methodism into the capital of the Highlands, but he makes a statement which gives us a little light. He says: 'Benjamin and William Chappel, who had been here three months, were waiting for a vessel to return to London. They had met a few people every night to sing and pray together; and their behaviour, suitable to their profession, had removed much prejudice.' They were Methodists. On the occasion of Wesley's first visit to Inverness we have only this allusion to the little assembly which was the germ of the Methodist Society which was afterwards established in the town. During this stay in Inverness, Wesley was brought into association with its Presbyterian ministers. On Friday, April 27, he breakfasted with Mr. M'Kenzie, the senior minister, 'a pious and friendly man.' He was asked to preach in the Presbyterian church, and did so 'with very uncommon liberty of spirit.' The next morning he preached at seven o'clock in the library, a large room; but it would not contain the congregation, and many were constrained to go away. Afterwards he rode to Fort George, which he describes as 'a very regular fortification, capable of containing four thousand men.' When he was mounting his horse to ride back to Inverness he got a message from the commanding officer which must have gratified him. It was to the effect that he was welcome to preach to the troops if he so desired. But he had only just time to reach Inverness; so he missed the opportunity of enjoying one of his favourite occupations—preaching to soldiers.

Sunday, April 29, was a day ever to be remembered. At seven o'clock in the morning, the benches having been removed, the library contained the congregation 'tolerably well.' Then, at five o'clock in the afternoon, he preached in the church once more. John Helton had intended to preach in the open air in the evening; but the ministers asked him to preach in the church, which he did, to a large and attentive congregation. After the service many people followed Wesley and his companions to their lodgings. Wesley spent some time with them in prayer. Then he advised them, as many as could, to meet together and spend an hour every evening in prayer and useful conversation. Setting out early the next

morning in fine weather, he and his two preachers rode from Inverness. A little before they reached Nairn they were met by a messenger, sent by Mr. Dunbar, the minister, who desired Wesley to have breakfast with him and to preach in his church. He complied with the request. Then the weather changed, and the rain commenced. Through a heavy downpour the riders made their way to Keith, where they rested, and 'dried themselves at leisure.' The next day they rode to Aberdeen, and spent the rest of the week there. It was the week of 'the great storm.' They had snow or rain every day. Wesley says that the weather was the same as far as London, and that so general a storm had scarce been in the memory of man.

Wesley's visit to Aberdeen gave him much satisfaction. He preached on Sunday, May 6, in the College Kirk at Old Aberdeen to 'a very serious, though mostly genteel congregation.' In the evening he preached in the Methodist 'Room.' The next morning he took his leave of his own 'loving people.' Then he made his way to Montrose. He had designed to preach there, but found that no notice had been given. However, he went down to the Green and sang a hymn. Presently people flocked from all parts. He tells us that God gave him great freedom of speech; so that he hoped they did not meet in vain. In the evening he preached at Arbroath. The whole town seemed moved. This is his record: 'The congregation was the largest I have seen since we left Inverness; and the Society, though but of nine months' standing, is the largest in the kingdom, next to that of Aberdeen.' After visiting Dundee, on Friday, May 11, he reached Edinburgh; and his jubilant note ceases for a while to be heard.

When Wesley arrived in the city he received a melancholy account of the state of things there. The congregations were nearly as usual; but the Society which, when he was there before, had consisted of above a hundred and sixty members, had shrunk to about fifty. He says: 'Such is the fruit of a single preacher's staying a whole year in one place! together with the labours of good Mr. Townsend.'[1] There can be no doubt that the publication of the Hervey letters by Dr. Erskine dealt a heavy blow on Methodism in Edinburgh; but we get more light on the temporary check to its advance in the city

[1] For Townsend, see *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, i. 410–411.

from a letter which Wesley wrote to Lady Maxwell on February 6, 1771. He says:

> I cannot but think the chief reason of the little good done by our preachers at Edinburgh is the opposition which has been made by the ministers of Edinburgh, as well as by the false brethren from England. These steeled the hearts of the people against all the good impressions which might otherwise have been made, so that the same preachers by whom God has constantly wrought not only in various parts of England, but likewise in the northern parts of Scotland, were in Edinburgh only not useless. They felt a damp upon their own spirits; they had not their usual liberty of speech; and the word they spoke seemed to rebound upon them, and not to sink into the hearts of their hearers. At my first coming I usually find something of this myself; but the second or third time of preaching, it is gone; and I feel, greater is He that is with us than all the powers of earth and hell.

On Sunday, May 13, Wesley preached in the chapel taken by Lady Glenorchy, which he describes as 'standing at a great distance from ours in the most honourable part of the city.' Between twelve and one o'clock he preached in the High School yard, it being too stormy to preach on the Castle Hill. A little before six he preached in the Methodist 'chapel,' as he ventures to call the preaching-house. It was crowded above and below. On May 17 he 'took a solemn leave of Edinburgh,' and began his journey to England, having much to think about during his ride to Newcastle.

Wesley made Newcastle the centre of his work in the neighbourhood until June 11. He may have stayed with William Smith, who had married Jane Vazeille a year before. He was a class-leader, a local preacher, and Wesley's chief official in the Orphan House Society. Leaving Newcastle, on his way to the South, we note that, reaching Stockton, he preached in the evening before the door of Mr. Watson's house, to a numerous congregation. The next morning, at five o'clock, he preached in the 'new House' which had been 'strangely raised when the case appeared quite desperate.' He tells us that God touched the heart of a man of substance who bought the ground and built the 'House' without delay. Continuing his journey, on June 15 he makes a record which casts light on the condition of the roads in England at that time. No man knew them better. He says: 'I was agreeably surprised to find the whole road from Thirsk to Stokesley,

which used to be extremely bad, better than most turnpikes. The gentlemen had exerted themselves, and raised money enough to mend it effectually. So they have done for several hundred miles in Scotland, and throughout all Connaught in Ireland; and so they undoubtedly might do throughout all England, without saddling the poor people with the vile imposition of turnpikes for ever.' In the afternoon he reached Whitby, where he stayed for three days, and conducted services which gave him much encouragement. Making his way slowly, he visited the Societies in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. We note that on Saturday, July 7, he rode to Miss Bosanquet's new residence. She had removed from Leytonstone, in Essex, to Cross Hall, in Yorkshire. Her house was about two miles from Batley, near Leeds. Her philanthropic work was continued. Her 'Christian Family' at Cross Hall consisted of orphan children whom she supported from her own resources; also of a few ladies like-minded with herself.[1] Wesley says, 'Her family is still a pattern and a general blessing to the country.' Four days later he reached Doncaster, and preached at noon in the 'new House,' which he describes as 'one of the neatest in England.' John Hampson had preached the first Methodist sermon in Doncaster, in a common lodging-house in Marshgate, kept by Elizabeth Riley, 'a poor, eminently-pious woman.' She became one of the first Methodist members in the town. Wesley had preached in Doncaster in 1763 for the first time. The ground for the first preaching-house was purchased in St. Sepulchre Gate. We do not wonder at Wesley's expression of delight when he made the record of the service he held in 1770. He says that the new 'House' was sufficiently crowded; and, what is more strange, with serious and attentive hearers. Then he adds this note of surprise: 'What was more unlikely, some years since, than such a house or such a congregation should be seen here!'

As we follow Wesley in his journey to London, and read his records of the progress of Methodism that had been made in so many of the towns and villages he visited, we cannot fail to see that the hard work of previous years had produced permanent effects in the country. It is true that opposition continued; but those who saw the future most clearly must

[1] See Wesley's *Journal*, v. 375, *note*.

have been convinced that every effort to stop its progress would fail. That conviction sustained the courage of the men and women who were toiling to bring the energy of a new religious life into the experience of the nation. They were filled with hope as they watched the night-clouds moving away touched with the light of the coming day. Wesley shared these convictions. His visit to the North of Scotland had strengthened them, though his visit to Edinburgh may have subdued his expectation of immediate and universal success. The news from America, however, had increased his confidence. But as he rode along he had to cease from thinking of the distant future and fix his mind on a near horizon. It had been arranged that the Conference should be held in London on August 7, and he knew that questions vital to the welfare of Methodism would have to be considered and settled. So, in his journey, he faced the difficult problems that the Conference would have to solve. It was well that he had recovered his physical strength and high spirits; for the years 1770 and 1771 laid heavy burdens upon him.

Wesley arrived in London on Thursday, August 2. Five days afterwards the Conference began. It ended on the following Friday. In the first days of the session the ordinary business was transacted. We notice that, in the stations of the preachers, America appears for the first time, the appointments being Joseph Pilmoor, Richard Boardman, Robert Williams, and John King. The number of members in the Methodist Societies in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland was 29,406. The question of the increasing debt was seriously considered. In order to prevent its further increase it was resolved that for the ensuing year an absolute stop should be put to the building of all preaching-houses. The resolution was as follows: 'Let no new house be built; no addition or alteration made in any old one, unless the proposers thereof can and will defray the whole expense of it without lessening their Yearly Subscription.' The old debt amounted to £5,671, the new to £1,287—nearly £7,000. It was determined to make an effort to pay off the old debt; and the assistants were directed to encourage the people in each place, 'like those in Birmingham, to make a push toward paying off their own debt.' The fact was that, in a number of places, preaching-houses had been built with the expectation that the

Conference would give considerable monetary assistance to the trustees out of 'the general expenses fund.' In the course of the discussion the proposal was made that all the preaching-houses should be vested in a general trust consisting of persons chosen out of the whole nation. But, while the Conference agreed that the proposal should be considered, this caution was appended to the resolution; 'Only beware this does not interfere with the Yearly Subscription. Do not drop the substance by catching at a shadow.'

We judge that it was towards the close of the Conference that a subject which was so much on Wesley's mind was considered. In one of the answers to the question, 'What can be done to revive the work of God where it is decayed?' special counsels were given to the preachers. They were so important that we must quote them.

We said in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.' Wherein?

(1) With regard to *man's faithfulness*. Our Lord Himself taught to use the expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on His authority, that if a man is not 'faithful in the unrighteous mammon,' God will not give him the true riches.

(2) With regard to *working for life*. This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. 'Labour'—literally, 'work'—'for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life.

(3) We have received it as a maxim that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification.' Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should 'cease from evil, and learn to do well.' Whoever repents should do 'works meet for repentance.' And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

Review the whole affair.

(1) Who of us is *now* accepted of God?

He that now believes in Christ, with a loving, obedient heart.

(2) But who among those that never heard of Christ?

He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, according to the light he has.

(3) Is this the same with 'he that is sincere'?

Nearly, if not quite.

(4) Is not this 'salvation by works'?

Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*.

(5) What have we, then, been disputing about for these thirty years?

I am afraid, about words.

(6) As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: we are rewarded 'according *to our works*,' yea, '*because of our works*.' How does this differ from *for the sake of our works*? And how differs

this from *secundum merita operum*—as our works *deserve*? Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.

(7) The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact. God does, in fact, justify those who, by their confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule?

It is a doubt, God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own saying so is not proof; for we know how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

(8) Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified state tend to mislead men? almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our works; according to the whole of our inward tempers, and our outward behaviour.[1]

When we read this extract from the *Minutes* of the Conference of 1770 we have some difficulty in understanding the effect these declarations produced. But they have a long foreground, which we shall have to consider in our next chapter. In the meanwhile, we may say that we agree with the comment of the note-writer in John Wesley's *Journal*. It is as follows: 'The *Minutes*, with great clearness and precision, state the Methodist position in relation to the extreme form of Calvinism which was playing havoc in all the Methodist borders, and also in the most fruitful pastures of the Church of England, of the Dissenting congregations in England, and of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. Reading these *Minutes* in the light of modern evangelical opinion, we have a difficulty in understanding why they should have created so great a sensation, resulting in a disastrous controversy.'[2]

Unaware of the sensation that would result from the publication of the *Minutes* of the Conference of 1770, John Wesley left London, and spent the remainder of the year in visiting the Societies in Cornwall, Bristol, Oxfordshire, Norwich, and other towns and neighbourhoods in the Midlands and Southern parts of England. Now and then he returned to London. On the last day of August we find him in Cornwall, reading Lord Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*. Wesley usually received attacks on himself with extraordinary calmness; but when his people were assailed his temper was roused. He thought they were attacked in the sentence: 'Martin

[1] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 95–96. [2] John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 380, *note*.

has spawned a strange brood of fellows, called Methodists, Moravians, Hutchinsonians, who are madder than Jack in his worst days.' Mr. C. Lawrence Ford has suggested that Wesley seems either not to recognize, or to ignore, Lord Lyttelton's allusion to Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, in which the three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, represent the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the John Calvin varieties of Christianity.[1] Adopting these names in his dialogue, Lord Lyttelton pours scorn on Martin and Jack, the representatives of the Anglican and Calvinistic Churches. We must reproduce what Wesley says to the man who afterwards became the author of the well-known tract on *The Conversion of St. Paul*—a tract which produced a remarkable effect at the time of its publication.

I would ask any one who knows what good breeding means, 'Is this language for a nobleman or a porter?' But, let the language be as it may, is the sentiment just? To say nothing of the Methodists (although some of them, too, are not quite out of their senses), could his lordship show me in England many more sensible men than Mr. Gambold and Mr. Okely? And yet both of these were called Moravians. Or could he point out many men of stronger and deeper understanding than Dr. Horne and Mr. William Jones? (if he could pardon them for believing the Trinity!) And yet both of these are Hutchinsonians. What a pity is it that so ingenious a man, like many others gone before him, should pass so peremptory a sentence in a cause which he does not understand! Indeed, how could he understand it? How much has he read upon the question? What sensible Methodist, Moravian, did he ever calmly converse with? What does he know of them, but from the caricatures drawn by Bishop Lavington or Bishop Warburton? And did he ever give himself the trouble of reading the answers to those warm, lively men? Why should a good-natured and a thinking man thus condemn whole bodies of men by the lump? In this I can neither read the gentleman, the scholar, nor the Christian.[2]

It is clear that Wesley's sense of humour was slumbering when he made this attack on Lord Lyttelton. It is a relief to see him on Saturday, September 1, taking a walk to the top of Carn Brea. We wonder what the modern antiquary would say to this description of the objects he saw on that hill: 'Here are many monuments of remote antiquity, scarcely to be found in any other part of Europe: Druid altars of enormous size, being only huge rocks, strangely suspended

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, v. 120. [2] John Wesley's *Journal*, v. 383–384.

one upon the other ; and rock basins, hollowed on the surface of the rock, it is supposed, to contain the holy water. It is probable these are at least coeval with Pompey's theatre, if not with the Pyramids of Egypt.' He had evidently given much attention to the statements contained in Dr. Borlase's *Antiquities of Cornwall.* We admire his respect for his old antagonist's opinions concerning Carn Brea ; but later research has deprived them of value.

Wesley arrived in Bristol on September 8. He stayed there for a month, and was deeply interested in ' the revival ' at Kingswood School. We have seen that he had been disappointed with his failure to make the place a home for ' a Christian family.' It was prospering as an educational establishment, but that did not fully satisfy him. His visits there had often depressed him. On one occasion he was tempted to close the school and abandon his experiment. But in 1770 he was delighted to find that the spirit of the school was changing. His ideal was being realized ; and the depression that had often afflicted him passed away. In his *Journal* there is a long account of the ' revival.' Its influence was not confined to the school. There was ' an uncommon revival of the work of God in all the Societies round about.' The Society at Kingswood within a few months increased from a hundred and eighteen to above three hundred members ; and every day ' more and more were convinced of sin, and more and more enabled to rejoice in God their Saviour.'

On October 1 and the following days Wesley preached in many of the towns round Bristol. In every place he found increased congregations. The revival was spreading through the neighbourhood. On Sunday, October 7, there is a significant entry in his *Journal* which shows an important result of this great movement. There is much ' between the lines ' of the statement which can be read by those who understand the relations of the two brothers to each other at this critical time. He says : ' My brother and I complied with the desire of many of our friends, and agreed to administer the Lord's Supper every other Sunday at Bristol. We judged it best to have the entire service, and so began at nine o'clock.' The days of attending the parish churches for the reception of the sacrament were passing away in Bristol, and the time was approaching when a question of supreme importance to

the Methodist people, not only in England, but also in America, would have to be faced.

Wesley returned to London on October 20, and filled up the rest of the year with frequent journeys to towns in its more immediate neighbourhood. Returning to the Foundery on Saturday, November 10, a rumour, which seems to have reached him in the country, was confirmed. George Whitefield was dead. It appears that an arrangement had been made between the two old friends that in case of Whitefield's death John Wesley should preach his funeral sermon. This arrangement seems to have been known to Whitefield's executors, who waited on Wesley and desired him to preach in the Tottenham Court Road Chapel on Sunday, November 18. He retired to Lewisham, his old retreat, and spent the week in preparing his sermon.

Tyerman, in his *Life of Whitefield*, gives a full description of his last sermons and of his death. He shall be our guide. On Saturday morning, September 29, 1770, Whitefield left Portsmouth, in America, for Boston, intending to preach at Newbury Port the next morning. On his way he reached Exeter, a town fifteen miles from Portsmouth. He was stopped by people who prevailed on him to preach. He was ill at the time, and a friend remonstrated with him and tried to prevent him from running an obvious risk. He said to him, 'Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach.' He replied, 'True, sir.' Then, clasping his hands, and looking up to heaven, he added, 'Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not of it. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal Thy truth, and come home to die.' The news that he was to preach caused an immense multitude to assemble. He mounted a 'hogshead,' and for two hours the people listened to him as he enforced the words, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.' He seemed to be conscious that his end was near. One of his hearers long remembered one part of his discourse: 'I go to rest prepared; my sun has arisen, and, by aid from heaven, has given light to many. It is now about to set for—no, it is about to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Oh, thought divine! I soon shall be in a world where time, age, pain, and sorrow are unknown. My body

fails, my spirit expands. How willingly would I live for ever to preach Christ! But I die to be *with* Him!'

Jonathan Parsons, who had been for twenty-four years the Presbyterian minister at Newbury Port, met Whitefield at Exeter. On arriving at Newbury Port Whitefield was unable to leave the boat without assistance; but in the course of the evening he recovered his spirits. Tyerman describes Newbury Port as 'an ordinary New England village, its streets narrow, and not overcrowded with either traffic or passengers.' The manse, where Whitefield was the guest of Jonathan Parsons, was a large building which possessed a spacious entrance-hall, and a fine oak staircase which led up to the bedroom in which Whitefield was to seek much-needed rest. Tyerman shall tell the story of that evening:

> While Whitefield partook of an early supper, the people assembled at the front of the parsonage, and even crowded into its hall, impatient to hear a few words from the man they so greatly loved. 'I am tired,' said Whitefield, 'and must go to bed.' He took a candle, and was hastening to his chamber. The sight of the people moved him; and, pausing on the staircase, he began to speak to them. He had preached his last sermon; this was to be his last exhortation. There he stood, the crowd in the hall 'gazing up at him with tearful eyes, as Elisha at the ascending prophet.' His voice flowed on until the candle which he held in his hand burned away and *went out in its socket*! The next morning he was not, for God had taken him.

Whitefield died at six o'clock on Sunday morning, September 30, 1770. Tyerman gives particulars of his struggles for life. It is enough to say that, in his opinion, there can be little doubt that the disease which terminated his life was *angina pectoris*. The name of that fierce assailant causes us to turn away from the thought of Whitefield's sufferings. He was buried on Tuesday, October 2. At one o'clock all the bells in Newbury Port were tolled for half an hour, and all the ships in the harbour hoisted their flags half-mast. At two o'clock the bells tolled a second time. At three o'clock they called the people to attend the funeral. Thousands assembled, and formed a procession a mile in length. At the service one of the hymns of Dr. Watts was sung. It is familiar to Methodists throughout the world. It commences with the words: 'Why do we mourn departing friends?' That question is hard to answer at such a moment. We do not wonder that at the

service in the Presbyterian meeting-house on that day 'some of the people sang, and some wept, and others sang and wept alternately.' After the concluding prayer, 'the immense crowd departed, weeping through the streets, as in mournful groups they wended their way to their respective homes.'

In his *History of the American Methodists* Jesse Lee says that 'Whitefield had often felt his soul so much comforted in preaching in the Presbyterian meeting-house at Newbury Port that he told his friends, long before his death, that if he died in that part of the world he wished to be buried under the pulpit of that house. The people, who remembered his request, had it now in their power to grant it; and they prepared a vault under the pulpit, where they laid his body.' An innumerable host has made the meeting-house at Newbury Port a place of reverent pilgrimage.[1]

On Sunday, November 18, Wesley went to the chapel in Tottenham Court Road. He says, in his *Journal*, that 'an immense multitude was gathered together from all corners of the town.' He at first was afraid that a great part of the congregation would not be able to hear; but his voice was strengthened so that even those who stood about the door heard him distinctly. 'It was an awful season. All were as still as night; most appeared to be deeply affected; and an impression was made on many which one would hope will not speedily be effaced.' The sermon he preached is well known to readers of Wesley's *Works*.[2] Remembering that he was speaking to a congregation largely made up of Calvinists, many of whom were unfriendly to himself, we are specially interested in the closing section of his sermon. It dealt with the question, 'How shall we improve this awful providence?' The first part of his answer was: 'By keeping close to the grand doctrines which he delivered.' His reply may well be read by ministers of all churches in the present day:

(1) Let us keep close to the grand scriptural doctrines which he everywhere delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature, with regard to which even the sincere children of God (such is the present weakness of human understanding) are, and have been, divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may 'agree to differ.' But, meantime, let us hold fast the essentials of 'the faith

[1] Tyerman's *Life of George Whitefield*, ii. 596–602. [2] See vi. 167–182.

which was once delivered to the saints,' and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on at all times and in all places!

(2) His fundamental point was, 'Give God all the glory of whatever is good in man'; and, 'In the business of salvation, set Christ as high and man as low as possible.' With this point, he and his friends at Oxford, the original Methodists, so called, set out. Their grand principle was, There is no power (by nature) and no merit in man. They insisted, all power to think, speak, or act aright is in and from the Spirit of Christ; and all merit is (not in man, how high soever in grace, but merely) in the blood of Christ. So he and they taught: There is no power in man, till it is given him from above, to do one good work, to speak one good word, or to form one good desire. For it is not enough to say, All men are *sick of sin*. No, we are all '*dead* in trespasses and sins.' It follows that all the children of men are 'by nature, children of wrath.' We are all 'guilty before God,' liable to death temporal and eternal.

(3) And we are all helpless, both with regard to the power and to the guilt of sin. For 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' None less than the Almighty. Who can raise those who are *dead*, spiritually dead in sin? None but He who raised us from the dust of the earth. But on what consideration will He do this? 'Not for works of righteousness that we have done.' 'The dead cannot praise Thee, O Lord'; nor do anything for the sake of which they should be raised to life. Whatever, therefore, God does, He does it merely for the sake of His well-beloved Son: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.' He himself 'bore' all 'our sins in His own body upon the tree.' 'He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' Here, then, is the sole meritorious cause of every blessing we do or can enjoy—in particular of our pardon and acceptance with God, of our full and free justification. But by what means do we become interested in what Christ has done and suffered? 'Not by works, lest any man should boast,' but by faith alone. 'We conclude,' says the Apostle, 'that man is justified by faith, without the works of the law.' And 'to as many as' thus 'receive Him giveth He power to become the sons of God, even to those that believe in His name; who are born, not of the will of man, but of God.'

(4) And 'except a man be' thus 'born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.' But all who are thus 'born of the Spirit' have 'the Kingdom of God within them.' Christ sets up His Kingdom in their hearts; 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' That 'mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus,' enabling them to 'walk as Christ also walked.' His indwelling Spirit makes them both holy in heart and 'holy in all manner of conversation.' But still, seeing all this is a free gift, through the righteousness and blood of Christ, there is eternally the same reason to remember, 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'

(5) You are not ignorant that these are the fundamental doctrines which he everywhere insisted on. And may they not be summed up, as it were, in two words—the new birth and justification by faith?

These let us insist upon with all boldness, at all times, and in all places—in public (those of us who are called thereto), and at all opportunities in private. Keep close to these good, old, unfashionable doctrines, how many soever contradict and blaspheme. Go on, my brethren, in the ' name of the Lord, and in the power of His might.' With all care and diligence, ' Keep that safe which is committed to your trust,' knowing that ' heaven and earth shall pass away, but this truth shall not pass away.'

John Wesley delivered his sermon again, in the afternoon of the same day, in the Moorfields Tabernacle. On Friday, November 23, at the desire of the trustees of the Tabernacle at Greenwich, he preached it once more. The building would not contain the congregation. There was some noise at first ; but in a little while all were silent. Wesley's comment on the service is : ' Here, likewise, I trust God has given a blow to that bigotry which had prevailed for many years.' When he reviewed the year, on its closing day, he says, ' How many blessings has God poured upon us this year ! May the next be as this, and much more abundant ! ' He had lost one of his greatest friends ; but the work for which he lived was prospering. The boundaries of the field were extended, and from almost every part there came the songs of harvest.

## XXII

## ATTACK AND DEFENCE

TOWARDS the close of January, 1771, an event occurred which must have brought Wesley some temporary relief. On Wednesday, January 23, this record appears in his *Journal*: 'For what cause I know not to this day, —— set out, proposing never to return.' Then in Latin he adds: 'I have not left her; I have not sent her away; I will not recall her.' It is easy to fill up the blank space. His wife had left him. She went to Newcastle-on-Tyne. According to Tyerman, she had bought a house there situated in Pilgrim Street. She had previously spent several months in the town in the pleasant society of her daughter, Mrs. William Smith. We will not waste any emotion over this migration. The separation continued for a short time; then, yielding to the persuasions of her daughter and William Smith, she returned to her husband. This was her first flight. It was followed at intervals by two others. The final exodus occurred in 1776 under circumstances we shall have to record.[1]

We must now direct our attention to the college at Trevecca, in South Wales; for events were happening there which had a decisive effect on the relations of John Wesley to Lady Huntingdon and the Calvinists of England, Wales, and Scotland. It must be noted that the college was established 'for the education of young men of piety, belonging to any denomination; who, when prepared, were to be at liberty to enter into the ministry, either in the Established Church, or amongst other classes of Christians.' Lady Huntingdon had such a high opinion of John Fletcher's piety, learning, and talents, that she invited him to take the superintendence of the college; and, by his advice, Joseph

[1] We have abstained from criticizing Mrs. John Wesley at any length. If our readers wish to know more about her their curiosity will be gratified by consulting Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*. He knew more about her than any other writer with whom we are acquainted.

Benson was persuaded to accept the office of head master, for which post he had been previously recommended by John Wesley. Benson, at the time of his appointment, was a master at Kingswood School. Having paid a short visit to Trevecca College in January, 1770, he returned to Kingswood. After he became head master at Trevecca he was sometimes absent from the college, as he was 'keeping his terms' at Oxford. On one of these occasions, a zealous advocate of the doctrines of Calvin visited Trevecca. He made a deep impression on the students. The teachings of Calvin became the topic of constant debate. In the Rev. James Macdonald's *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson*, published in 1822, the result of these discussions is given. He says: 'From this time, the balance of opinion on subordinate points was broken, and the views which Mr. Benson has expressed in a tract on the "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" were taken to pieces. Her ladyship, also, beginning to attach more importance to the doctrines of election and predestination, and to censure as heretical the doctrines held by Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Benson, and Mr. Wesley, at length determined to exclude from her college all anti-predestinarians.' The first blow was struck at Joseph Benson. In January, 1771, he was dismissed from the college. He wrote to Fletcher and told him the news. In his reply, written on January 7, Fletcher says: 'If the procedure you mention be fact, and your letter be a fair account of the transactions and words relative to your discharge, a false step has been taken. I write by this post to her ladyship on the affair with all possible plainness. If the plan of the college be overthrown I have nothing more to say to it. I will keep to my tent for one; the confined tool of any one party I never was and never will be. If the blow that should have been struck at *the dead spirit* is struck at *dead* Arminius, or *absent* Mr. Wesley—if a master is turned away without any fault, it is time for me to stand up with firmness, or to withdraw.'

On February 20 Fletcher set out for Trevecca. On March 18 he wrote a letter to Wesley on his return to Madeley, and on March 22 he also wrote to Benson. Both letters are of exceptional interest; but our purpose will be served if we say that, after making full inquiries into the condition of the college, Fletcher saw that it was no longer the place for him, as he was not likely to do or receive any good there, especially as

Calvinism strongly prevailed. It appears that the doctrinal part of the *Minutes* of the Methodist Conference of 1770 had been sent to Lady Huntingdon. She had wept much over it. She honestly feared that Wesley had given up 'the grand point of the Methodists, free justification'—a heresy that appeared to her 'to be horrible, worth being publicly opposed, and such as a true believer ought to be ready to burn against.' Fletcher had tried to soften matters; but in vain. The Trevecca students were commanded to write their sentiments on Wesley's supposed doctrine of 'salvation by works, working for life, the merit of works, &c.'; and, says Fletcher, 'whoever did not fully disavow it was to quit the college.' He took part in this curious investigation of the meaning of the extracted portion of the *Minutes* of 1770. In his letter to Wesley he says: 'I wrote among the rest, and showed the absurdity of inferring from these *Minutes* that you had renounced the Protestant doctrine and the Atonement. I defended your sentiments, by explaining them, as I have heard you do, and only blamed the unguarded and not sufficiently explicit manner in which they were worded. I concluded by saying that as, after Lady Huntingdon's declaration, I could no longer stay in the college but as an intruder, I absolutely resigned my place, as I must appear to all around as great a heretic as yourself. . . . This step had a better effect than I expected. My lady weighed with candour what I had advanced, though she thought it too bad to be laid before the students. In short, I retired in peace and as peacemaker, the servant and no more the principal of the college.'[1]

Turning aside for a time from the main path we are pursuing, we will follow the fortunes of Joseph Benson at Oxford. They cast light on episodes we have already recorded. He had entered his name in the books of the University, on March 15, 1769; and from that time had regularly kept his terms at St. Edmund Hall. That name arrests our attention. His purpose was to become a clergyman of the Church of England. When he was discharging his duties as classical master at Kingswood School, and as head master of Lady Huntingdon's college, he was led to preach to the colliers at Kingswood,

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher*, 177–178. For Fletcher's letter to Benson, see Macdonald's *Life of Benson*, 18–19. For Fletcher's 'Account' of the case, see Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher*, 180–186.

and in the villages near Trevecca. He took care to avoid services held in 'church-hours.'

The news of his preaching became known to his tutor at Oxford. On his return to the University, in 1771, Mr. Bowerbank, the vice-principal of St. Edmund Hall, had a conversation with him and refused to act any longer as his tutor. He refused, even supposing that his pupil engaged for the future to omit everything of the kind, and to reside wholly at the University. He also declined to sign his testimonials for Orders. The principal of the Hall, Dr. George Dixon, who was the uncle of the tutor, 'was far from thinking that there was sufficient cause for Mr. Benson's removal, and used all his influence to persuade the tutor to adopt a more equitable determination.' But his advice was rejected. This was a fortunate circumstance. Benson left Oxford. From April to August, 1771, he acted as a Methodist preacher in Wiltshire; and at the Bristol Conference of that year he was received 'on trial,' and appointed to the London circuit. It must have cheered him to receive, in January, 1772, a letter from Dr. Dixon in which the following sentences occur: 'If you are clearly convinced in your own mind that you can best show your love to your blessed Saviour, bring most glory to God, and do most good to man, by going out into the highways and hedges to call sinners to repentance, I shall be far from being the first to condemn you, or dissuade you from so charitable an employment; and great pleasure would it give me to hear that you meet with success in it, in some degree proportionate to such singular zeal to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.'[1] Dr. Dixon's letter greatly encouraged Benson. In the present day, when we read it, we rejoice in the fact that there was in Oxford at that time a man of such foresight and breadth of view. Dr. Dixon we know was possessed of a large measure of Christian charity. He refused to join in the prosecution of the St. Edmund Hall students who were expelled from the University in 1768; and in 1772 we have another revelation of his character in this letter, which gives him a permanent place in the esteem of broad-minded Christian men.

On March 11 John Wesley set out on a visit to Ireland, where his presence was urgently needed. He visited several

[1] Macdonald's *Life of Benson*, 33–34.

Tw

towns on his way to Parkgate, and landed in Dublin early in the morning of Sunday, March 24. He preached in the new 'Room' which had been built in Gravel Walk, now Blackhall Place. It had been opened by Thomas Taylor in July, 1770. This visit to Ireland was occasioned by reports which had reached Wesley concerning the state of the Society in Dublin. He at once began to make inquiries into the causes of the unrest that prevailed. Giving the result of his investigations he says: 'It was plain there had been a continual jar for at least two years past, which had stumbled the people, weakened the hands of the preachers, and greatly hindered the work of God. I wanted to know the ground of this; and, that I might do nothing rashly, determined to hear the parties, separately first, and then face to face.' He first talked with the preachers; then with the leaders, whom he met on several occasions. The meetings were exciting, but he hoped for peace. On Sunday, March 31, he held a meeting of leaders, stewards, and preachers 'who spoke their minds freely to each other.' He then saw that 'the whole evil might be removed, all parties being desirous of peace.' He had prepared a document on March 29 which he read to the leaders on Wednesday evening, April 3. We give it in full, because it casts light on the constitution and functions of leaders' meetings at that time.

1. That it may be more easily discerned whether the members of our Societies are working out their own salvation, they are divided into little companies, called classes. One person in each of these is styled the leader. It is his business (1) to see each person in his class once a week; to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort them; (2) to receive what they are willing to give toward the expenses of the Society; and (3) to meet the assistant and the stewards once a week.

2. This is the whole and sole business of a leader, or any number of leaders. But it is common for the assistant in any place, when several leaders are met together, to ask their advice as to anything that concerns either the temporal or spiritual welfare of the Society. This he may or may not do, as he sees best. I frequently do it in the larger Societies; and on many occasions I have found that in a multitude of counsellors there is safety.

3. From this short view of the original design of leaders, it is easy to answer the following questions:

*Q.* 1. What authority has a single leader?

He has authority to meet his class, to receive their contributions, and to visit the sick in his class.

*Q.* 2. What authority have all the leaders of a Society met together?

They have authority to show their class-papers to the assistant, to deliver the money they have received to the stewards, and to bring in the names of the sick.

*Q.* 3. But have they not authority to restrain the assistant, if they think he acts improperly?

No more than any member of the Society has. After mildly speaking to him they are to refer the thing to Mr. W.

*Q.* 4. Have they not authority to hinder a person from preaching?

None but the assistant has this authority.

*Q.* 5. Have they not authority to displace a particular leader?

No more than the door-keeper has. To place and to displace leaders belongs to the assistant alone.

*Q.* 6. Have they not authority to expel a particular member of the Society?

No; the assistant only can do this.

*Q.* 7. But have they not authority to regulate the temporal and spiritual affairs of the Society?

Neither the one nor the other. Temporal affairs belong to the stewards; spiritual to the assistant.

*Q.* 8. Have they authority to make any collection of a public nature?

No; the assistant only can do this.

*Q.* 9. Have they authority to receive the yearly subscription?

No; this belongs to the assistant.

4. Considering these things, can we wonder at the confusion which has been here for some years?

If one wheel of a machine gets out of its place what disorder must ensue!

In the Methodist discipline the wheels regularly stand thus: the assistant, the preachers, the stewards, the leaders, the people.

But here the leaders, who are the lowest wheel but one, were got quite out of their place. They were got at the top of all, above the stewards, the preachers, yea, and above the assistant himself.

5. To this, chiefly, I impute the gradual decay of the work of God in Dublin.

There has been a jar throughout the whole machine. Most of the wheels were hindered in their motion. The stewards, the preachers, the assistant, all moved heavily. They felt all was not right. But if they saw where the fault lay, they had not strength to remedy it.

But it may be effectually remedied now. Without rehearsing former grievances (which may all die and be forgotten) for the time to come, let each wheel keep its own place. Let the assistant, the preachers, the stewards, the leaders, know and execute their several offices. Let none encroach upon another, but all move together in harmony and love. So shall the work of God flourish among you, perhaps as it never did before, while you all hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

DUBLIN, March 29, 1771.

Crookshank, in describing the results of this final meeting,

says: 'Such was the constitution of Methodism in 1771, as plainly laid down by its venerated founder. What the result would have been if it had been more liberal is a question that it is impossible now to decide; but, as a matter of fact, there can be no doubt it was not satisfactory to all parties in Dublin, and there were subsequent years of contention.'[1]

Wesley did not return to England until July 24, when he landed at Parkgate. He had spent much time in visiting the Irish circuits. The news he received from England kept him acquainted with the important events that were occurring there; but they did not compel his return. He was busy with his pen. It is necessary to refer to one subject of his correspondence which is of exceptional interest. Writing to Mrs. Crosby from Londonderry, on June 13, he expressed his opinion on the question of women preachers. It is well known that Mrs. Crosby was one of them; but she was ready at all times to accept his decision as to the continuance of her work. In his Londonderry letter he says: 'I think the strength of the cause rests there: on your having an extraordinary call. So I am persuaded has every one of our lay preachers; otherwise, I could not countenance his preaching at all. It is plain to me that the whole work of God termed Methodism is an extraordinary dispensation of His providence. Therefore, I do not wonder if several things occur therein which do not fall under ordinary rules of discipline. St. Paul's ordinary rule was, "I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation." Yet, in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions, at Corinth in particular.' This letter has a note of hesitation in it; but it certainly shows that he was not prepared to silence Mrs. Crosby.[2]

It has been said that Mrs. Susanna Wesley was the first Methodist woman preacher; but that statement should be received with caution. In *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*[3] we have described the meeting she held in the Epworth Rectory during the absence of her husband who had gone to London to attend Convocation. At these meetings sometimes two hundred people were present. The meetings

[1] Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*, i. 244.

[2] Myles, in his *Chronological History*, says that this letter was written to Miss Bosanquet. His mistake probably arose from the fact that Mrs. Crosby resided with Miss Bosanquet.

[3] pp. 61–63.

were conducted with certain variations, on the lines of those in the Religious Societies. Mrs. Wesley now and again read to the people some of 'the best and most awakening sermons' contained in books in her husband's library. She found that, by so doing, deep impressions were made on some of the people. But such reading of sermons differs from preaching in the right sense of the word. It is better to accept the word as it was understood by John Wesley and Mrs. Crosby in their correspondence.

Wesley was cautiously advancing along a path strewn with difficulties. Let us watch his progress. On February 14, 1761, in answer to a question put to him by Mrs. Crosby, he says:

> Hitherto, I think you have not gone too far. You could not well do less. I apprehend, all you can do more is, when you meet again, to tell them simply, 'You lay me under a great difficulty. The Methodists do not allow of women preachers: Neither do I take upon me any such character. But I will just nakedly tell you what is in my heart.' This will, in a great measure, obviate the grand objection, and prepare for J. Hampson's coming. I do not see that you have broken any law. Go on calmly and steadily. If you have time, you may read to them the *Notes* on any chapter before you speak a few words; or one of the most awakening sermons, as other women have done long ago.[1]

In the closing words of the last sentence it is possible that Wesley makes a direct allusion to his mother's practice in her short-lived Religious Society.

At the Conference of 1765 the question was asked, 'How can we encourage the women in the bands to speak, since "it is a shame for women to speak in the church"?' (1 Cor. xiv. 35). To this question Wesley gives his own reply. He says: 'I deny (1) that *speaking* here means any other than speaking as a public teacher. This St. Paul suffered not, because it implied "usurping authority over the man" (1 Tim. ii. 12). Whereas no authority either over man or woman is usurped by the speaking now in question. I deny (2) that the church in that text means any other than the great congregation.'[2] Following Wesley's progressive course, we note the fact that he sent another letter to Mrs. Crosby on March 18, 1769. In it he says: '1. Pray in private or public, as much as you can. 2. Even in public, you may properly enough intermix short

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 337, 8vo ed. [2] *Minutes of Conference*, i. 52.

exhortations with prayer; but keep as far from what is called preaching as you can: therefore never take a text; never speak in a continued discourse, without some break, above four or five minutes. Tell the people, "We shall have another prayer-meeting at such a time and place." If Hannah Harrison had followed these few directions, she might have been as useful now as ever.'[1] If we add Wesley's letter to Mrs. Crosby, written on June 13, 1771, to those from which we have quoted, we may form our opinions of his views on 'the preaching of women,' at the time we have reached.

During Wesley's visit to Ireland he received a letter from Fletcher which showed him that on his return to England he would have to face a serious difficulty. Not content with the dismissal of Benson from his tutorship at Trevecca, and the resignation of Fletcher, Lady Huntingdon's anger against the opponents of Calvinism remained unappeased. She looked on Wesley as the chief offender. She was highly incensed by the doctrinal *Minutes* of the Conference of 1770. Fletcher had tried to make her understand them, but had failed. No one can read them without wishing they had been more clearly expressed. It is no wonder that Lady Huntingdon did not grasp their meaning. We must make allowance for her anger, but the course she took to attack them cannot be excused. Fletcher's letter to Wesley was dated June 24, 1771. It contained a copy of a circular written by the Rev. Walter Shirley, the relative and one of the chaplains of Lady Huntingdon. It had been dispersed through the three kingdoms, and it must be quoted.

Sir,—Whereas Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday the 6th of August next, it is proposed by Lady Huntingdon, and many other Christian friends (real Protestants), to have a meeting at Bristol, at the same time, of such principal persons, both clergy and laity, who disapprove of the above *Minutes*; and as the same are thought injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity, it is further proposed that they go in a body to the said Conference, and insist upon a formal recantation of the said *Minutes*; and in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their protest against them. Your presence, sir, on this occasion, is particularly requested: but if it should not suit your convenience to be there, it is desired that you will transmit your sentiments on the subject to such person as you think proper to produce them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii 339, 8vo ed.

in the opposition to be made to such a *dreadful Heresy* to recommend it to as many of your Christian friends, as well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church, as you can prevail on to be there, the cause being of so public a nature.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
WALTER SHIRLEY.

P.S.—Your answer is desired, directed to the Countess of Huntingdon, or the Rev. Mr. Shirley, or John Lloyd, Esq., in Bath; or Mr. James Ireland, Merchant, Bristol; or to Thomas Powis, Esq., at Berwick, near Shrewsbury; or to Richard Hill, Esq., at Hawkstone, near Whitchurch, Shropshire. Lodgings will be provided. Inquire at Mr. Ireland's, Bristol.[1]

In Fletcher's letter to Wesley he says:

I think it my duty, dear sir, to give you the earliest intelligence of this bold onset, and to assure you that, upon the evangelical principles mentioned in your last letter to me, I for one shall be glad to stand by you and your doctrine to the last, hoping that you will gladly remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of the weak, and alter such expressions as may create prejudice in the hearts of those who are inclined to admit it. I write to Mr. Shirley to expostulate with him. He is the last man that should attack you. His sermons contain propositions much more heretical and anti-Calvinistical than your *Minutes*. If my letters have not the desired effect, I shall probably, if you approve of them and correct them, make them public for your justification.[2]

Fletcher wrote to Shirley; but he refused to recall his circular. So he took up his pen and wrote a pamphlet in defence of Wesley. It was finished on July 29. He submitted the manuscript to Wesley, who altered some 'tart expressions,' and sent it to Thomas Olivers, who assisted him in matters of printing. He placed it with William Pine, of Bristol, who was one of Wesley's printers, and the work was soon on the press. It must have been a relief to Wesley to secure such help from Fletcher. He was a powerful advocate, well skilled in controversial writing. We have sometimes hesitated to accept the title by which he is generally known—'the seraphic Fletcher.' We have remembered his passion for the soldier's life in his younger days, and his disappointment when a peace was signed which prevented him from engaging in battle. When he came to England the soldier's spirit was manifested in his readiness to protect a friend. 'The seraphic Fletcher'!

[1] Myles's *Chronological History*, 133, fourth ed.
[2] Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher*, 189.

In our hesitation there comes to us a recollection of 'the helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim' of Milton's glorious 'Ode.' Our hesitation vanishes. As to the pamphlet, we know that his heart failed him on the eve of its publication; but, when that crisis was over, he devoted himself steadily to the defence of Wesley, and wrote his long series of *Checks to Antinomianism* with conspicuous skill and courage.

The Conference assembled in Bristol on Tuesday, August 6. Lady Huntingdon and Shirley must have been disappointed with the result of their appeal. Instead of a host of Calvinists swarming into the 'New Room' at Bristol, Shirley appeared two days later with two of the ministers attached to Lady Huntingdon's chapel, three laymen, and two students from Trevecca College. They were graciously received. After some conversation Shirley produced a written declaration which he wished the Conference to sign. Wesley examined it, made some alterations, and then he and fifty-three of his preachers signed it. The declaration was as follows:

> Whereas the doctrinal points in the *Minutes* of a Conference, held in London, August 7, 1770, have been understood to favour justification by works; now the Rev. John Wesley and others assembled in Conference do declare that we had no such meaning, and that we abhor the doctrine of Justification by Works as a most perilous and abominable doctrine: and, as the said *Minutes* are not sufficiently guarded in the way they are expressed, we hereby solemnly declare, in the sight of God, that we have no trust or confidence but in the alone merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for Justification or Salvation, either in life, death, or the day of judgement: and though no one is a real Christian believer (and consequently cannot be saved) who doth not good works, where there is time and opportunity, yet our works have no part in meriting or purchasing our salvation from first to last, either in whole or in part.[1]

In his *Journal* Wesley makes only a slight reference to this interview with Shirley and his friends. He says, 'We conversed freely for about two hours; and I believe they were satisfied that we were not so "dreadful heretics" as they imagined, but were tolerably sound in the faith.' He makes no mention of the 'declaration in his *Journal*,' but passes on to describe his visit to Wales. We cannot dismiss the subject so swiftly.

[1] In John Wesley's Standard *Journal* there is a photograph of this declaration. It is in Wesley's handwriting. We judge that after the corrections had been made in Shirley's manuscript, Wesley wrote out the declaration for the signature of himself and his preachers.

Wesley resisted the pressure brought to bear on him to stop the publication of Fletcher's MS. It must be remembered that in Shirley's widely circulated letter, Wesley had been accused of the serious crime of attacking 'the very *fundamental* principles of Christianity, and of *dreadful heresy*.' In a letter addressed to Lady Huntingdon on August 14, we find the charge against Wesley more clearly stated. Justifying the publication of Fletcher's 'letters,' Wesley says:

> Those letters, therefore, which could not be suppressed without betraying the honour of our Lord, largely prove that the *Minutes* lay no other foundation than that which is laid in Scripture, and which I have been laying, and teaching others to lay, for between thirty and forty years. Indeed, it would be amazing that God should at this day prosper my labours, as much if not more than ever, by convincing as well as converting sinners, if I was '*establishing another foundation, repugnant to the whole plan of man's salvation under the covenant of grace, as well as the clear meaning of our Established Church and all other Protestant Churches.*' This is a charge indeed! But I plead not guilty.[1]

After the 'declaration' was signed in the Conference, Shirley was required 'to make some public acknowledgement' of the fact that he had mistaken the meaning of the *Minutes*. He hesitated to do so; but in a few days he sent this 'message' to Wesley: 'Mr. Shirley's Christian respects wait on Mr. Wesley. The declaration agreed to in Conference August 8, 1771, has convinced Mr. Shirley he had mistaken the meaning of the doctrinal points in the *Minutes* of the Conference held in London, August 7, 1770; and he hereby wishes to testify the full satisfaction he has in the said declaration, and his hearty concurrence and agreement with the same.'[2] But such a 'message,' addressed to an individual, was not enough to correct an impression which had been made on the minds of a large number of ministers and laymen throughout the country. It was necessary that Fletcher's pamphlet should be published. Its character may be judged by its title: 'A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Last *Minutes*. Occasioned by a Circular printed Letter, inviting principal Persons, both Clergy and Laity, as well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church, who disapprove of those *Minutes*, to oppose them in a Body, as a dreadful Heresy: And designed to remove Prejudice,

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xii. 447–448.

[2] Tyerman's *Life of Fletcher*, 190.

check Rashness, promote Forbearance, defend the Character of an eminent Minister of Christ, and prevent some important Scriptural Truths from being hastily branded as heretical. In Five Letters, to the Hon. and Rev. Author of the Circular Letter. By a Lover of Quietness and Liberty of Conscience.' The publication of the *Letters* led to a reply from Shirley, which is fully reported and discussed by Tyerman. For six years the contention between the Methodists and the Calvinists raged. One effect of the controversy especially concerns us. The long friendship between Lady Huntingdon and John Wesley was ended. We do not forget the good results of that friendship ; but we are convinced that a time had arrived when Wesley might be left to manage his own Societies without the assistance of her supervision.

It has been necessary to describe at some length the incidents in which Shirley occupies a prominent place ; but there was another part of the business of the Conference of 1771 that was of greater importance. In reading the *Minutes* of the Conference of 1771 we find no mention of the Calvinist deputation. But the following question and answer arrest our attention :

'*Q.* 7. Our brethren in America call aloud for help. Who are willing to go over and help them ?

'*A.* Five were willing. The two appointed were Francis Asbury and Richard Wright.'

In 1770, as we have seen, America came for the first time on 'the stations,' the preachers appointed being Joseph Pilmoor, Richard Boardman, Robert Williams, and John King. In 1771 the appointments were Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, Francis Asbury, and Richard Wright. In the list of the numbers of members in the Society America makes its appearance for the first time, the number being 316, a small company when compared with the 31,000 members in England, Scotland, and Ireland. But we do not wonder at the loud call for help that had come across the sea. Notwithstanding the disturbed condition of the American colonies, a condition that was constantly increasing, the work of the Methodist missionaries and their helpers was constantly growing. The fields were white unto harvest ; and at this Conference one of the greatest reapers that the Methodist Church has known was sent out into the distant harvest-field.

We have described some of the incidents in the early life of Francis Asbury, and have watched his training for the great work with which he was entrusted. Speaking of the condition of Methodism in America when he left England, the Rev. Frederick W. Briggs, his careful biographer, says that the work there, at the time of his appointment, had reached 'just that stage of progress which required for its true, deep, and continuous extension, the leadership of a man of his never-failing good sense, ready tact, quick discernment, sound discretion, and steadfastness of purpose.' These qualities Asbury possessed in a remarkable degree. Great difficulties awaited him. The Society in New York had lost some of its most useful members. Dr. Streeter says: 'When Asbury arrived in New York, November 13, 1771, Embury and every member of his Irish-German Class Society had for eighteen months been settled in Camden Valley, New York,[1] and eighteen months later Embury died. A few years later all the survivors of the Embury group left Camden Valley for Canada, led to take this step, they being Royalists, by the near approach of the Revolution.' The 'group' contained Barbara Heck and other strong workers. Asbury and Wright had been treated with great kindness by the Bristol Methodists, and it must have been with sorrow that they said farewell. Even to-day, those who know something of the work that lay before them cannot fail to sympathize with them; but that feeling passes away at the thought of Asbury's work in the cities, towns, and wilds of America.

The year 1771 is crowded with important incidents, but it is only necessary that we should close our review of its proceedings by recording one more outstanding event. Charles Wesley's long residence in Bristol had been of great service to the Methodists of that city; but his thoughts often turned towards London. At last, in 1771, the change was made towards the middle of the year. Once more Mrs. Gumley comes on the scene. She offered him the lease of her town house, in Chesterfield Street, Marylebone, which had still twenty years to run. Mr. Telford says, 'She refused several offers for the house, and told Mr. Charles Wesley that she would not put up the bill again until she heard whether his wife and he would accept her proposal. She left them the house, richly furnished, and

[1] Camden is in New York State, about two hundred miles from New York City.

supplied with everything a family could need.' Her only condition was that they should maintain it, and pay the ground rent.[1] Her offer was accepted, and Charles Wesley, his wife, and their three children, Charles, Sarah, and Samuel, soon settled in the new home.[2] The coming of Charles Wesley to London brought John Wesley much relief. It solved many of the difficulties which arose from his constant absence from town, and it gave him opportunities for paying even greater attention to the Societies in the country.

On Saturday, December 21, there is an entry in John Wesley's *Journal* that brings the light of other days around us. It makes us think of his experiences both before and immediately after his visit to Georgia. He says: 'I met an old friend, James Hutton, whom I had not seen for five and twenty years. I felt this made no difference; my heart was quite open; his seemed to be the same; and we conversed just as we did in 1738, when we met in Fetter Lane.' The friendship was resumed, and occasional letters passed between them.

[1] See Mr. Telford's *Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley*, 186.
[2] The settlement in London gave increased opportunities for the cultivation of the remarkable musical abilities of Charles Wesley's two sons.

## XXIII

## JOHN WESLEY'S PARISH

THE settlement of Charles Wesley in London brought considerable relief to John Wesley; and the willingness of John Fletcher to undertake his defence in the bitter discussion which raged in connexion with the controversy on Calvinism still further extended his freedom. It is no wonder that his thoughts often turned to America, and that rumours were spread through the Societies that he intended to cross the Atlantic in order that he might ascertain the exact position of Methodism in that country. Writing to his clerical friend, Walter Sellon, on December 30, 1769, he had said: 'It is not yet determined whether I should go to America or not. I have been importuned for some time; but *nil sat firmi video*. I must have a clear call before I am at liberty to leave Europe.' The rumours persisting, Sellon wrote him again on the subject in 1772. On February 1 he replied: 'You do not understand your information right. Observe, "I am going to America to turn bishop." You are to understand it *in sensu composito*. I am not to be a bishop till I am in America. While I am in Europe, therefore, you have nothing to fear. But as soon as ever you hear of my being landed at Philadelphia, it will be time for your apprehensions to revive. It is true that some of our preachers would not have me stay so long; but I keep my old rule: *Festina lente*.'[1]

It will be seen that Wesley was prepared to act as a bishop if he went to America and found that circumstances demanded such action. It must be remembered that in 1772 the Church of England in America possessed no resident bishop. The colonies were supposed to be in the diocese of London; at any rate, they were considered to be under the care of the Bishop of London. In *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* we have referred

[1] *Works*, xiv. 202, 203, 8vo ed. These interesting letters cast a clear light on Wesley's ecclesiastical opinions; they prepare us to understand his subsequent action in regard to the ordination of American preachers.

to the chaotic condition of affairs existing in the colonies before Bishop Gibson took them in hand. When he was appointed to the see of London, in 1723, he discovered that he had no legal jurisdiction over the Churches in the colonies. He therefore declined to appoint a commissary, and, for a time, the colonies lacked episcopal control. Wilberforce, in his *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America*, tells us that Dr. Gibson at last obtained a special commission from the Crown, and the ecclesiastical charge of the colonies was conferred on him. But, even then, says Wilberforce, 'he felt that his hold upon those distant parts was little what it should be, if he were indeed to deem himself their bishop. . . This authority, shadowy as it was, expired with the life of Bishop Gibson, since the commission under which he acted was granted only to himself personally, and not to his successors.'[1] It was not until November 14, 1784, that Samuel Seabury was consecrated Bishop of Connecticut by four non-juring prelates at Aberdeen, in Scotland. Then, on February 4, 1787, the Bishops of New York and Pennsylvania were consecrated in London by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Virginia being consecrated in England in 1790. These facts show the condition of the colonies in respect of bishops at the time when Wesley was contemplating a visit to America.

In Wesley's letter to Walter Sellon we are arrested by the words: 'As soon as ever you hear of my being landed at Philadelphia, it will be time for your apprehensions to revive.' By this caution we think he meant that if, on landing in America, he found it necessary to exercise powers usually supposed to belong exclusively to bishops, he would proceed to act. For instance, he might find it necessary to appoint some of his preachers to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the members of the Methodist Societies, and to set them apart for their office by imposition of hands. Did he think that as a presbyter he had power to ordain? If we could ascertain his convictions on the subject of bishops and presbyters, we could answer the question and remove the mystery of his precautionary hint to Walter Sellon.

It is well known to students of Methodist history that on Monday, January 20, 1746, Wesley read Lord King's *Account*

[1] Wilberforce's *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America*, 136–139.

*of the Primitive Church.* We give the result in his own words: 'In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but, if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent on all others!' The note of exclamation at the end of the sentence suggests that he had made a new discovery. But he was not prepared to accept Lord King's assertion until he had given it full consideration. After he had thought about the question for ten years, this was his conclusion as stated in a letter to the Rev. James Clarke, of Hollymount, Ireland, written on July 3, 1756: 'As to my own judgement, I still believe "the episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical." I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think he has unanswerably proved that "neither Christ nor His Apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government; and that the plea of divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the Primitive Church."'[1] It will be seen that Wesley's opinion on 'bishops and presbyters' was not solely derived from Lord King's book. That book only set him thinking on the subject. Then the arguments of Bishop Stillingfleet established opinions he had gradually formed and never abandoned. When facing the possibility of a visit to America in 1772, he was prepared to act according to his convictions.[2]

It was fortunate for the Methodist Societies in England and Scotland that John Wesley, in 1772, relinquished his plan of visiting America. He devoted the greater part of the year to the visitation of the Societies in the country, leaving his brother in charge of those in London. It was a year full of fruitful work. On January 16 he set out for Luton. The snow lay so deep on the road that it was not without much difficulty, and some danger, he and his companions reached

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiii. 179, 8vo ed.

[2] Wesley's evident wish to visit America was not gratified. Twelve years later the question of 'bishops and presbyters' arose again in connexion with Methodism in America, and was settled to the great advantage of the Methodist Church in that country.

the town. This visit is notable because Coriolanus Coplestone, Dr. Prior's curate, offered him the use of the church. Dr. Prior was the non-resident vicar. This visit from John Wesley was evidently expected, for the glass had been taken out of some of the windows of the church to enable those who stood outside to hear. 'The frost was exceeding sharp.' Wesley accepted the curate's offer for the sake of the people, but says that he might just as well have preached in the open air. He had a large audience. The next morning about a hundred people came to hear him once more in the cold church. He returned to London; and on Monday, February 10, went to Dorking. On his return journey he read a book published, it is believed, by Anthony Benezet, 'an honest Quaker.' Wesley describes its theme in words that have been long remembered. He says that the book was 'on that execrable sum of all villanies, commonly called the slave trade.' His opinion of its contents was: 'I read of nothing like it in the heathen world, whether ancient or modern; and it infinitely exceeds, in every instance of barbarity, whatever Christian slaves suffer in Mohammedan countries.' He was one of the earliest antagonists of the slave trade in England. He uttered his protests against it with vehemence. The country was beginning to turn its attention to its iniquities. It was in 1772 that Lord Mansfield, in the Somersett case, decided 'that whenever and wherever a slave set foot on English soil he was from that moment free.' The decision was treated as an *obiter dictum*. Time was wasted in discussions on the meaning of 'English territory.' For instance, 'Did it include the deck of an English ship?' We know that, in spite of the judgement, the selling of slaves continued in Bristol until the close of 1792. But to the close of his life John Wesley continued his protest against the traffic. One of his last acts was to write to William Wilberforce, and strengthen him in his great fight for the abolition of slavery.[1]

On March 1 John Wesley left London and did not return there until October. Before leaving he had met several of his friends, who had begun a subscription to prevent his riding on horseback. In one of his journeys he had been seriously injured by a fall from his horse, and we do not wonder that he was obliged to admit that his opinions concerning

[1] On the Somersett case see Pollard's *Factors in American History*, 163–164.

the superiority of the saddle to the chaise might be questioned. But the arrangements of his anxious friends were not completed; time pressed, and he once more mounted his horse and left London. There is a sign of weariness in his reference to this subscription: 'If they continue it, well; if not, I shall have strength according to my need.' At several stages of his journey we shall see that the anxiety of his friends was justified.

In following Wesley in his long journey we are often reminded of the trying experiences of other days. On his way to Bristol he preached once more at 'the Devizes,' and this is his comment: 'The furious prejudice which long reigned in this town is now vanished away, the persecutors, almost to a man, being gone to their account.' From Bristol he made his way slowly to Bolton. This is his entry in his *Journal* on April 3: 'How wonderfully has God wrought in this place! John Bennet, some years ago, reduced this Society from seven score to twelve, and they are now risen to a hundred and seventy.' On Sunday, April 5, he preached in the morning to as many as 'the House' would contain, but at noon the congregation was so large that he was obliged to preach in the street. In the evening he was in Manchester. The Birchin Lane 'House' was 'far too small,' and crowds had to go away. His note on the inhabitants of Manchester arrests attention. 'The speculative knowledge of the truth has ascended here from the least to the greatest. But how far short is this of experimental knowledge! Yet it is a step toward it not to be despised.' On Saturday, April 11, he and his companions 'went on comfortably, in hired chaises,' from Ambleside to Whitehaven. The next morning he preached at eight o'clock to the usual congregation of 'plain, earnest people.' Then, in the evening, he had 'wellnigh all the gentry in the town to hear him.' After the service he held a meeting of the children, with which he was delighted. On Monday, at five o'clock in the evening, he preached again; once more all the gentry in the town were present. With them were several clergymen; 'and the Spirit applied the word.' His comment on this visit to Whitehaven is: 'For the present even the rich seemed to be moved.' Setting out from Cockermouth for Carlisle on Tuesday, April 14, he travelled along a road that was 'miserably bad.' The little

company of Methodists there had secured a place for the preaching; it was 'out of the gate,' but it was 'tolerably well filled' in the afternoon. Two years before this visit there were only fifteen members in the Carlisle Society, but some progress in numbers had been made. He describes the Carlisle Methodists, whom he met on this visit, as 'a small company of plain, loving people.' They were evidently of the type that always appealed to his affection. When we survey the few incidents we have selected from the records of his journey towards Scotland, we see that in England Methodism was making steady advance in neighbourhoods which had sometimes caused Wesley no little anxiety. We think it is not too much to say that in 1772 the success of Methodism in England was assured.

When leaving Carlisle, Wesley made inquiries for the road to Glasgow. He found that it was not much out of his way to go by Edinburgh. So he chose that route. In the evening he went five miles forward and reached the house of one of his friends, who was surprised to see him. He received a hearty welcome. Under a lowly roof he had 'sweet and quiet rest.' It was 'a lone house'; but his coming was made known, and the next morning he preached at five o'clock to a large congregation. After the service he rode for upwards of twenty miles 'through a most delightful country, the fruitful mountains rising on either hand, and the clear stream running beneath.' Then, in the afternoon, the scene changed. There was a furious storm of rain and snow, and the travellers had an experience of the wild weather that awaited them in Scotland. But they reached Selkirk in safety; and on Thursday, April 16, they went on to Edinburgh, and found the mountains covered with snow.

Wesley spent Good Friday in Edinburgh. He went to the Episcopal chapel and enjoyed the service. The prayers were read 'well, seriously, and distinctly,' and the sermon, upon the sufferings of Christ, was 'sound and unexceptionable.' Above all, the behaviour of the whole congregation, rich and poor, was solemn and serious. He was in his element. The quietness and reverence of the service appealed to him, and satisfied his strong craving for rest. Watching him, it is difficult to recognize 'the field preacher' who so often stood in 'a tumult of the people.' His visit to Edinburgh was brief.

On the next day he set out for Glasgow. The snow covered the mountains on either hand, and the frost was 'exceeding sharp.' He had intended to preach in the open air when he arrived at Glasgow; but, as the weather was more like that in the middle of January than the middle of April, he preached in the 'Room.' On Sunday evening, however, the crowd was so great that he was obliged to quit the shelter of the 'preaching-house.' He went out of doors and held his service. The following Thursday was the fast before the Lord's Supper. The day was kept as a Sunday; the shops were all closed and no business was done. At Dr. Gillies's house he met three ministers who had come to assist him in the administration of the sacrament. He had much conversation with them; in his opinion they seemed to be 'pious as well as sensible men.' After a short stay in Glasgow he returned to Edinburgh, preached there, and then, on Saturday, April 25, he set out for the North, reaching Perth in the evening.

Wesley's visit to Perth was full of interest. When he arrived he sent a message to the Provost asking him to grant him the use of the Guildhall for his services on the Sunday. His request was at once granted. He preached there twice on that day. After the evening service the Provost sent him an invitation to lodge at his house. He accepted it, and spent an agreeable evening with him and three ministers. The next day he had a long talk with Dr. Oswald and Mr. Fraser, whom he describes as two as pious and sensible ministers as any he knew in Scotland. During this visit to Perth an interesting incident occurred. On Tuesday, April 28, after preaching in the evening to a large congregation, he received an unexpected honour. He was presented with the freedom of the city. The diploma was in Latin, but is worth translating into English:

> The illustrious order of Magistrates and honourable Court of Aldermen of the famous city of Perth, as a proof of their well-merited esteem and affection for John Wesley, have invested him with the immunities of the above-mentioned city, and with the privileges of the fellowship and brotherhood of a Burgess.
>
> This 28th day of April, in the year of our salvation, 1772.[1]

After visiting Aberdeen, where, on May 3, he worshipped in the morning in the English church and once more admired

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, v. 456, *note*.

'the exemplary decency of the congregation,' he preached at the College Kirk in the Old Town, and at the Methodist 'House' in the evening. Then on May 5 he went to Arbroath and preached in the new Methodist 'House' there. He was delighted with the change in the character of the town. He says: 'In this town there is a change indeed! It was wicked to a proverb; remarkable for Sabbath-breaking, cursing, swearing, drunkenness, and a general contempt of religion. But it is not so now. Open wickedness disappears; no oaths are heard, no drunkenness seen in the street. And many have not only ceased from evil, and learned to do well, but are witnesses of the inward Kingdom of God, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."' Is it any wonder that the next evening the Arbroath magistrates imitated the action of those of Perth? On Wednesday, May 6, they presented him with the freedom of their corporation.

After visiting Dundee, Wesley went to Edinburgh on Saturday, May 9. He stayed there until May 20, and faced the serious difficulties that had arisen in the Society. On Sunday, May 10, he attended the Church of England service in the morning and that of the Kirk in the afternoon. He draws a contrast between them which, as we might expect, is strongly in favour of the former. Then he preached in the evening to a large congregation in the Methodist chapel. The next day he spoke severally to the members of the Society, as closely as he could. The original Society had been scattered abroad by the doctrinal discussions that had taken place; only about ten of the original members remained. The Society in 1772 numbered ninety members, but the Hervey letters still exerted their influence. In addition, the Calvinistic controversy, that had caused the rupture of the friendship of Wesley and Lady Huntingdon, had reached Scotland. Evidence of that fact was furnished during this visit. After preaching at Ormiston to a large and deeply-serious congregation, he dined with the minister, who heartily wished him God-speed. But he soon changed his mind. Lord Hopetoun informed him that he had received a letter from Lady Huntingdon assuring him that Wesley was 'a dreadful heretic, to whom no countenance should be given.' At Haddington, where, a few days later, he had designed to preach at the house of Provost Dickson, he had to abandon his intention He learned that the Provost had

seen Shirley's 'Circular Letter,' and durst not receive 'heretics.' It was clear that, with Edinburgh as a centre, there was a space of country hostile to Wesley's teaching. Still, there were some exceptions. At Leith, for instance, he was offered the use of the Episcopal chapel and willingly accepted it. He read prayers and preached there. Once more he was assisted by the devoutness of those who worshipped with him. His record is: 'Here also the behaviour of the congregation did honour to our Church.'

When we think of Wesley's work in Scotland during these winter-like weeks we feel much sympathy with him in his travels and incessant services. We wonder at his endurance. He was suffering all the time from the effects of a fall from his horse some months before he left London. In falling he was seriously injured by the pommel of his saddle, and mischief was set up that he sought in vain to ignore. On May 18, when he was in Edinburgh, he made the acquaintance of, and formed a friendship with, a well-known surgeon, Dr. Hamilton, a man whose name is familiar to the readers of Methodist history. Wesley mentioned his trouble to him; and, on May 18, he brought Dr. Monro and Dr. Gregory with him, who made an examination. They advised him that, as soon as he got to London, he was to 'aim at a radical cure, which they judged might be effected in about sixteen days.' When he came to London he consulted Mr. Wathen, who gave him similar advice. In addition he said that the operation would probably compel him to be in one posture fifteen or sixteen days. Mr. Wathen also said he did not know whether the operation might not give a wound to his constitution from which he would never recover. Wesley bore his trouble until January 4, 1774, when Mr. Wathen performed the necessary operation, from which Wesley swiftly recovered; he resumed his work after a week's rest.[1] We often admire the strength of his constitution; but when we think of his sufferings during this long period, so crowded with work, our sympathy is increased.

Before leaving Scotland, Wesley paid a visit to the Bass Rock. After his description of his interview with the Edinburgh doctors we read his record of his adventures with some surprise. The isolated rock stands out in the sea at a distance of about seven miles from Dunbar. But Wesley was determined to see

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, vi. 8.

it, because, 'in the horrid reign of Charles the Second,' it was the prison of 'those venerable men who suffered the loss of all things for a good conscience.' The attraction was irresistible to a grandson of John Westley, of Winterbourne Whitchurch, in Dorset, and of Samuel Annesley, of St. Giles's Church, London. Reaching the shore, he saw the Bass Rock standing out at a distance of two miles in the sea. Describing his adventure, he says: 'The strong east wind made the water so rough that the boat could hardly live; and when we came to the only landing-place (the other sides being quite perpendicular), it was with much difficulty that we got up, climbing on our hands and knees. The castle, as one may judge by what remains, was utterly inaccessible. The walls of the chapel, and of the governor's house, are tolerably entire. The garden walls are still seen near the top of the rock, with the well in the midst of it. And round the walls there are spots of grass that feed eighteen or twenty sheep. But the proper natives of the island are Soland geese, a bird about the size of a Muscovy duck, which breed by thousands, from generation to generation, on the sides of the rock.' He watched these geese with the interest he always took in birds that flew over him as he rode over lonely moorlands. But on that day his thoughts were with the men who suffered in Scotland and elsewhere in 'the killing times.' He ends his description with these words: 'How many prayers did the holy men confined here offer up in that evil day! And how many thanksgivings should we return for all the liberty, civil and religious, which we enjoy!' Not content with his visit to the Bass Rock, he went on the same day to the ruins of Tantallon Castle, once the seat of the great earls of Douglas. The next day he viewed 'the famous Roman camp' that lies on Doon Hill, where the great fight took place between the armies of Cromwell and General Leslie. He says: 'Here lay General Leslie with his army, while Cromwell was starving below. He had no way to escape; but the enthusiastic fury of the Scots delivered him. When they marched into the valley to swallow him up, he mowed them down like grass.' This vivid description of the turning-point in the battle sends us to Carlyle's *Oliver Cromwell* for a fuller description of the fight, but once more we are impressed by the keenness of Wesley's observation as he stood on the field of Dunbar.

Refreshed in spirit, Wesley crossed the Border and went on to Newcastle. On June 1 he began 'a little tour' through the dales, reaching Barnard Castle in the evening. Barnard Castle Circuit was widespread; and at that time it was visited by a remarkable revival of religion. As we read Wesley's description of that great movement in the Dales we often think of his walk from London to Oxford, in October, 1738, when he read Jonathan Edwards's book on *The Great Awakening in America*. It made a deep impression on him. The great work in New England commenced in Northampton, New England, under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. It spread through the colony. The character of the revival may be judged from Edwards's description of it. 'The work is very glorious if we consider the extent of it, being in this respect vastly beyond any former outpouring of the Spirit that ever was known in New England. There has formerly sometimes been a remarkable awakening and success of the means of grace in some particular congregation, and this used to be much taken notice of and acknowledged to be glorious, though the towns and congregations round about continued dead; but now God has brought to pass a new thing; He has wrought a work of this nature that has extended from one end of the land to the other, besides what has been wrought in other British colonies in America.'[1] These words lived in Wesley's memory. They kindled a hope of a similar revival in England. That hope had been brightened by the great work that had spread from Otley through the Societies in England and Ireland. But what he longed to see was a revival that would not only influence the members of his Societies, but the whole nation. He had never abandoned 'the larger hope.' He listened eagerly to the story of the revival in the Dales, and his determination to aim at the evangelization of England was strengthened and confirmed.[2]

On June 4 Wesley left the Dales and returned to Newcastle. On June 15, leaving that town, he commenced an evangelizing tour in the neighbouring counties, making his way steadily towards Leeds, where the Conference was to be held on Tuesday, August 4. His long itinerary was marked by interesting and encouraging incidents which enheartened him when weary with

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 223–224.
[2] For the account of the revival in the Dales see Wesley's *Journal*, v. 465–472.

his work. The records in his *Journal* should be read. One of them is of exceptional interest. We have seen that his wife had taken up her residence in Newcastle. He met her there; when he left the town she accompanied him on his journey. They arrived at Pateley Bridge on Wednesday, June 29, and the next morning left for Otley. Arriving at the 'Moorcock,' a lonely inn situate in the centre of the moor, about half-way between Dacre and Fewston, they rested for a time. In his *Journal*, John Wesley says: 'Calling at a little inn on the moors I spoke a few words to an old man there, as my wife did to the woman of the house. They both appeared to be deeply affected. Perhaps Providence sent us to this house for the sake of these two poor souls.' This is the brightest incident we can recall in Wesley's married life; we record it with pleasure. Leaving the 'Moorcock,' they made their way to Otley, in Wharfedale, where they were the guests of Dr. Ritchie. His daughter Elizabeth was then a girl of nineteen years of age; with her Wesley had much conversation. It was the beginning of a long friendship. In a note in his *Journal* the writer truly says: 'It was the beginning of a friendship growing more and more intimate until she closed his eyes in death.'[1]

On Tuesday, August 4, the Conference began in Leeds. The entry in Wesley's *Journal* is interesting, but disappointing. It is as follows: 'Generally, during the time of Conference, as I was talking from morning to night, I had used to desire one of our brethren to preach in the morning. But, having many things to say, I resolved, with God's help, to preach mornings as well as evenings. And I found no difference at all. I was no more tired than with my usual labour; that is, no more than if I had been sitting still in my study from morning to night.' Turning to the printed *Minutes* for the year, we find that the usual business was transacted; preachers were stationed, and financial difficulties were faced. Those difficulties were being constantly increased by the erection of new preaching-houses. A sum of £3,076 had been contributed towards the existing debt, which had been distributed, but 'the old debt' still remained. After considering the matter, the Conference resolved that, instead of a subscription, a collection

[1] For a description of this visit to Otley see extract from Miss Ritchie's *Journal* in Mr. Federer's article in the *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iii. 78–79

should be made in every preaching-house some time during the next autumn, the Kingswood collection being also made as usual. The money raised by this new collection was to be produced at the next Conference. As to its distribution, it was resolved as follows: 'We will return to every house that is in debt (provided it be old debt, not otherwise) at least what was collected there.' The resolution throws light on the subject of the origin and progress of Connexional Collections.

In reading the *Minutes* of the Leeds Conference of 1772 we find no reference to an incident which was of exceptional importance. It makes us for a few moments forget England. We look across the Atlantic. We think of the American 'missionaries' and their helpers at work, and rejoice in their success. It is clear that the small band of preachers needed to be reinforced. We know that Francis Asbury looked upon the whole of the British colonies in America as 'his parish,' but what could he do to carry out his evangelizing plans? His hands were full of work in Baltimore. The good work which King, Pilmoor, and Boardman had begun in that city demanded his special attention. Dr. Abel Stevens, in describing it, says that, in Baltimore, Asbury 'found a people prepared to his hands. A sail loft, at the corner of Mills and Block Streets, was provided free of charge, and was soon filled to overflowing, many coming from the country a distance of six miles before some of the people of the town had risen from their beds. . . . Asbury set about in good earnest to regulate the Societies by *settling*, as he says, the classes, and thereby giving to Methodism that form and consistency which it had in England; and no man knew better how to do this than he did.'[1] Webb saw the position clearly, and determined to go to England and persuade Wesley to send more missionaries to America. At the Leeds Conference he made his appeal. His address kindled the enthusiasm of his hearers. The result was that Thomas Rankin and George Shadford offered to go to America in the following spring. Writing to Shadford before he sailed on Good Friday, April 9, 1773, Wesley says, 'I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can.' Webb and his wife accompanied the

[1] Stevens's *History of American Methodism*, 62, abridged ed.

voyagers. Their ship came to an anchor in the Delaware, about sixteen miles south of Philadelphia, after a passage of seven and a half weeks.

Leaving Leeds, Wesley made his way to Wales, and visited his ' old friend,' Howell Harris. At his request he preached at Trevecca. Wesley says : ' We found our hearts knit together as at the beginning.' In their conversation about the students at the college, they found themselves in agreement concerning them. In fact, whatever may have been Lady Huntingdon's view of Wesley, the two old friends were firm in their affection for each other. On Saturday, August 29, Wesley arrived in Bristol, and on the following Wednesday preached at Bath. The ' Room,' though considerably enlarged, would not contain the people. He says that in Bath the congregation was continually increasing. He spent his time in visiting the Societies in the neighbourhood of Bristol, and did not reach London until Saturday, October 10. He stayed there for a week and then set off on a tour through the eastern counties and did not get back to London until November 7. But he could not rest. He constantly visited the Societies. Remembering his past experiences, it is a pleasure to note his *Journal* entry on Saturday, November 14, concerning Snowsfields. He says : ' I saw, for the first time, the chapel at Snowsfields full ; a presage, I hope, of a greater work there than has been since the deadly breach was made.' On December 2 he was at Bromley. A new preaching-house had been erected in the parish. We presume that his reference is to Bromley in Kent. We infer this from his description of the Society. He says : ' In speaking severally to the members of the Society, I was surprised at the openness and artlessness of the people. Such I should never have expected to find within ten miles of London.'

The winter of 1772 was not so severe as its predecessor, but it was marked by exceptional suffering among the labouring classes and the poor. Tyerman says that ' the long-continued war, a succession of inferior harvests, and other unfavourable events, had raised the price of provisions to such an extent that the distress of the nation had become alarming.' Long letters on the starved condition of the country were published in the newspapers and magazines. On December 21, in *Lloyd's Evening Post*, a remarkable letter from Wesley's pen appeared.

Eight days later it was published in the *Leeds Mercury*, and it was inserted in other newspapers and magazines. Wesley, while being one of the greatest of the English evangelists, stood in the van of social reformers. In his letter he answers the questions: '(1) Why are thousands of people starving, perishing for want, in every part of England? (2) Why have they no work? (3) Why is bread-corn so dear? (4) Why are oats so dear? (5) Why are beef and mutton so dear? (6) Why are pork, poultry, and eggs so dear? (7) Why is land so dear? (8) Why is it that not only provisions and land, but well-nigh everything else, is so dear? (9) Why are the taxes so high?' He faces all these questions with knowledge and courage. We will content ourselves with brief quotations from some of his answers.

(3) Why is bread-corn so dear? Because such immense quantities of it are continually consumed by *distilling*. Indeed, an eminent distiller, near London, hearing this, warmly replied: 'Nay, my partner and I generally distil but *a thousand quarters* of corn a week.' Perhaps so. Suppose five-and-twenty distillers, in and near the town, consume each only the same quantity. Here are five-and-twenty thousand quarters a week, that is, above twelve hundred and fifty thousand quarters a year, consumed in and about London! Add the distillers throughout England.

(6) Why are pork, poultry, and eggs so dear? Because of the monopolizing of farms, as mischievous a monopoly as was ever yet introduced into these kingdoms. The land which was formerly divided among ten or twenty little farmers, and enabled them comfortably to provide for their families, is now generally engrossed by one great farmer. One man farms an estate of a thousand a year, which formerly maintained ten or twenty. Every one of these little farmers kept a few swine, with some quantity of poultry; and, having little money, was glad to send his bacon, or pork, or fowls and eggs, to market continually. Hence the markets were plentifully served, and plenty created cheapness; but, at present, the great, the gentlemen farmers, are above attending to these little things. . . . Hence (to instance in a small article) in the same town where, within my memory, eggs were sold eight or ten a penny, they are now sold six or eight a groat.[1]

(7) Why is land so dear? Because, on all these accounts, gentlemen cannot live as they have been accustomed to, without increasing their income, which most of them cannot do but by raising their rents. The farmer, paying a higher rent for his land, must have a higher price for the produce of it. This again tends to raise the price of land. And so the wheel goes round.

[1] Fourpence.

(8) Why is it that not only provisions and land, but well-nigh everything else, is so dear? Because of the enormous taxes which are laid on almost everything that can be named. Not only abundant taxes are raised from earth, and fire, and water; but in England the ingenious statesmen have found a way to tax the very light![1]

(9) Why are the taxes so high? Because of the national debt. This must be, while this continues. I have heard that the national expense, in the time of peace, was, sixty years ago, three millions a year. Now the bare interest of the public debt amounts to above four millions, to raise which, with the other expenses of Government, those taxes are absolutely necessary.

After stating 'the evil,' Wesley asks, 'Where is the remedy?' He is forced to confess the difficulty of answering that question. He says: 'Perhaps it exceeds all the wisdom of man to tell.' However, he makes some suggestions. We will quote one of them, and leave the rest to be investigated by those who will turn to Tyerman's complete copy of the whole letter. This is his answer to the question, 'How can the price of wheat be reduced?' 'By prohibiting for ever that bane of health, that destroyer of strength, of life, and of virtue, *distilling*. Perhaps this alone will answer the whole design.'[2] Wesley's letter shows the condition of things in this country in 1772. We think it will be allowed that it also sheds light on questions that confront us in the present day.

Wesley's letter was written in Dover on December 9. His thoughts were soon turned to his ordinary work. He found that certain young men, 'vulgarly, though very improperly, called students,' had visited the town, and had left 'no stone unturned' in their attempt to tear away the Methodist members from the Society. But their attempt had ended in complete failure. Still, it was annoying to find that the Calvinistic controversy had been introduced into a Society that seemed to be prospering. Wesley preached in Dover on two evenings and two mornings to large congregations of attentive hearers. During the remainder of the month he visited several towns. Then he got back to London. On December 21 he gave himself up to the visitation of the sick. He found that they were comparatively few. His comment is: 'I hardly remember so healthy a winter in London. So wisely does God order all things that the poor may not utterly

[1] The Window Tax.
[2] See Tyerman's *Life of John Wesley*, iii. 130–134.

be destroyed by hunger and sickness together.' He soon found himself in the midst of poverty-stricken people. The last entry in his *Journal* for the year shows that the burden of their needs rested heavily on him. It was his custom to spend much time in private prayer. In these quiet interviews with God his strength was often renewed. But on December 31 we find a note in his *Journal* which shows his yearning for companionship in these days of suffering and distress. He admits that he was 'greatly embarrassed by the necessities of the poor.' So he asked others to join him when he spread their wants before God. He believed that in answer to their united supplications, God would reveal to them a way in which they might lessen the miseries of the poor of London. Light gradually travelled towards him. It was in this year that another friend of the poor began to organize a company of workers among them, which subsequently became known as 'The Christian Community.' It was founded by Mr. George Mackie, a member of the Methodist Society in London for fifty years. We do not know the exact date of its foundation; but from its later literature we find it was 'established under the patronage of the Rev. John Wesley in 1772.' In Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley* the work of 'The Christian Community' is explained, and its relation to 'the small band of godly Methodists sent forth by Wesley in 1772 to visit London paupers and London vagabonds' is indicated. There can be no doubt of the enduring influence and the success of the attempt of the Methodist effort in 1772 to reach and help the suffering poor of London.[1]

[1] See Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley*, iii. 134-135.

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